

## Vento Aureo: 2028

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by [subby\\_bubby\\_rose](#)

### Summary

The year is 2028. It has been 27 years since young Giorno Giovanna usurped the previous boss and took control of one of Italy's most powerful organizations, and 17 year old Bruno Mista is content living in the lap of luxury so generously provided to him by his godfather. But when Giorno goes missing one night, and Bruno's parents disappear soon after, he must put his high life aside to come to their rescue.

(Unedited, so please excuse the typos)

## Prologue- Generic Recap and Character Intro

Hello. Hi. My name is Bruno. Bruno Mista. I'm seventeen. I like playing video games, dancing, rock music, and fucking around with my friends. Regular sounding kid, right? That's what I thought, too.

This is the story of my adventure. But before we get there, I have to give you a bit of some background so you can actually understand this bizarre mess.

Twenty seven years ago, right here in this city, the mafia was everywhere. They ran it all-still do- and twenty seven years ago one of these mobsters was a guy named Bucciarati. I'm told he was a badass, so I'm pretty proud to share my name with him if that's true. He had a team all to himself, and on that team was Guido Mista, my father.

My dad was, and is, a character. He's someone you just can't forget about. Sure he's not the brightest bulb in the box, but he's got a heart of gold. He says he's a great shot, but I've seen the amount of bullet scars on him, so I'm not so sure. Fun to have as a father too, because most times he wanted to goof off as much as I did. I think we're a lot alike in that way. Anyways, this gunslinging motherfucker and Bucciarati and everyone else in the team were tasked with escorting the mafia boss' own daughter to her father, but plot twist! He just wanted to murder her, so they were like "fuck that" and shenanigans ensued.

That girl was my mom, Trish. Yeah, the most important girl in all of Italy back in '01. Well, you know how it ends. The bad guy is defeated and boom! Happy ending. Except for the guys who died and stuff.

You're probably thinking that right after this, my parents fell head over heels for each other and got married the next day, right? Nope. They were actually just friends for a while, because my mom finished up school and went to university to study fashion, while dear old Dad ran with his gang, so they couldn't really hang out. They stayed in contact with each other through shit like "instant messaging" and all that ancient tech. Then one year Mom came back to the city on break and they caught up in person. They'd both grown a lot and apparently were right up each other's alleys because Dad asked for a real date and they started a relationship from then on. Then they got engaged in 2009 and married in 2011 and I came along soon after.

My mother raised me with everything she had, like all amazing moms do. She was fun and sweet but she knew when I was lying and she made damn sure I did my English homework, even when I didn't want to. She knew how much growing up with a single parent affected her, so she'd always try and get Dad to drop the mafia to reduce the chances of, you know, him biting the dust on the job. He never died, but he got close a few times. Boy, was she pissed. I thought she was going to kill him herself! So I got to grow up with all that mob money AND two parents. Did it spoil me? Probably. But the one thing that kept me on track was my dad's best friend, who is also his boss.

His name is Giorno Giovanna, but I call him Uncle GioGio, because that's what he wanted me to call him. He was the new boss of the mafia. He's got all the money, bodies, and prestige he could want and yet he was always humble and kind to everyone. He's been running the joint for almost three decades now. Growing up, he'd take me around the city and show me all the cool shit he can do. He's the one who taught me about Stands.

When I was little I thought it was magic, but he made sure I knew it wasn't. He's such a cool guy.

When he and my dad were working and Mom was busy with her job, he'd use his Golden Experience to turn things into flowers or butterflies or lizards for me to look at. Under him, I was always protected. No school bully, street thug, or pickpocket could touch me. He made sure of that, and you could tell my parents were grateful they didn't have to worry about my safety all the time when I went out.

This story is kinda about him, kinda about me, and kinda about everyone else in my life. It makes me oddly proud to think about how I'm connected to these great people in this way, but you didn't come here to hear me mope around about my childhood. So this whole thing started when I was walking home from school one day....

# Boy Meets Stand

## Chapter Summary

Bruno is trapped by a spooky metal horse. Hijinks ensue.

Oh, Napoli. The city has been my home since forever, literally since the day I was born. In my very honest opinion, I've yet to see a prettier place. When I was a kid I always told myself "Bruno, dude, you're never going to leave Italy, and if you do, you're a dumbass". That's how much I love it here. Every walk home from school or night out on the town is a pleasure.

It was one such walk home on a breezy October afternoon where my life began to fall apart in the most awesome way possible. I remember I was listening to some early 2000's pop- real cheesy shit- that I had to memorize for a school thing when I had a very strange realization. See, it takes me roughly half an hour to walk home, and I know the route by heart. Off the campus, down the back alley, by the plaza, down another cobbled street, up the lane and onto the residential street. I could probably walk home with my eyes closed. But here's the thing- that day, when I looked up from my phone expecting to see a large, bustling city street, I saw the end of the back alley I had passed ten minutes ago- repeated over and over again. It was a never ending loop of the same bricks, same stains, same graffiti.

"What the fuck, what the fuck, what the fuck?" I whispered quietly to myself. My head spun around behind me only to see the same segment of alley stretching for miles in the other direction. My heart began to pound. At first I thought that I was going insane, that those stories Uncle GioGio used to tell me about The Infinite Death were coming true for me, that I'd be stuck here to die forever. But then I thought with both relief and rising dread that it was much more likely to be something I'd always been warned about- an enemy Stand, wanting to hold me for ransom or to torture me to get to Uncle GioGio.

So I looked around the segment of alley I was in, turning my gaze up every wall and over every cobblestone to find this guy. "I'm totally not afraid of you, if that's what you're thinking," I yelled, then slapped a palm to my face for saying something so dumb. That hand slid down my face and onto my chest, wherein my heart was beating so loudly I could hear it in my ears, and began to gently rub the small gold zipper on the front of my jacket. It was a birthday present I got from Uncle GioGio when I was really young. He always used to say to keep it close to me because it was good luck, and that it would protect me. How a zipper would protect me, I didn't know, but you bet your ass I kept that thing on me my whole life. I always had my mom sew it onto my favorite jacket since I didn't want to wear it like a necklace or earring. She must have been so glad to use her fashion design degree for such a thing.

Anyways, I was looking around for someone, anyone, but I was coming up completely empty. I decided that I was gonna call GioGio, but just as I was digging around for my phone, movement caught my eye and I snapped up. And as unbelievable as it sounds, I saw something enter through the invisible barrier that separated this loop from the next. It wasn't a person, but a large...horse-like...thing. It had long hair the same color as mine, bright pink, on its neck and hooves, black and white patterning, and hypnotic red, yellow and green eyes. But the most interesting thing about this creature was that it has three tails-each with a street sign on them.

"It's- you're a Stand!" I huffed, backing away from it. As I stumbled back, the large creature took a few steps back as well, stamping on the stones with its large hooves. This puzzled me. It looked startled, like I was. I reached into my pocket and took out my phone to try and take a picture of this thing, but when I brought the phone up, my hand, as well as the rest of my body, was covered in a pink aura. I jumped in surprise, almost dropping my phone, and yelped. Then another realization hit me. I took a step toward the creature and looked into its multicolored eyes.

"You're... my Stand, aren't you?" I whispered, stretching out my hand. The creature bobbed its head in a nodding motion, leaning down to touch my hand with its snout. The shock and mild fear I felt instantly disappeared and was replaced with a giddy excitement as I pet its nose.

"Holy shit, I have a Stand! Finally! I have a Stand!" I screamed shamelessly into the loop, laughing and stamping my feet. The Stand creature snorted and pawed at the stones with its front foot in response, sharing in my excitement. When I was done acting like a 5 year old, I took a chunk of its thick mane in my hand and pet its large neck with the other, moving around to the side of the Stand.

"Now, what do I call you? Hm..." I looked up and down the loop for an answer, searching for something cool or interesting to name it after. "Death Stallion? No, that's dumb. Stop being dumb, Bruno." I said aloud, just as the Stand huffed again and shook its neck. As it shook, the road signs attached to its three tails clanged against one another. I looked to the tails, then back to the creature's neck.

"Hey, 'Abbey Road'! That's not so bad, is it?" I said, and it agreed. Of course it would agree, it's me, after all.

"Glad we got that squared away, now the real question is- can I ride this thing?" I said, pretty much already knowing the answer. I grabbed the large, metallic shell covering Abbey Road's torso and hoisted myself up on its back. When I got up there that first time, it was like someone had just told me why I was alive. It was the most indescribable feeling of belonging I'd known. After taking a second to invite this feeling in, I grabbed two fistfuls of mane and steered Abbey around, turning it down the alley.

I inhaled, sighed all the air out, gave Abbey a swift kick in the side and reared my head back to laugh in surprise as it took a running leap out of the loop, bounding down the street with incredible speed. As it galloped down the street, I saw all the shocked faces of passersby- by their expressions, I could see who saw Abbey Road for who it really was and who saw it as a normal horse. But in all honesty, I didn't care. Let them know!

I think that had to be the greatest high of my entire life. When I close my eyes at night, sometimes I can still feel the salty sea breeze in my hair and the occasional small droplets of rain falling on my face. I can still hear my exhilarated screaming and the pounding of Abbey's hooves on the sidewalks. I remember the way the sun warmed my cheeks when it broke through the clouds as Abbey Road turned onto my street. It knew the way as well as I did.

The ride came to an end shortly after that because I was pretty much just sitting in my driveway on a giant horse creature listening to music. I dismounted and watched in satisfaction as the creature faded into nothing, its energy flowing back to me. I gave one more nod for a job well done and dug around in my pocket for my house keys, walking up the path.

From the outside, my parents' place doesn't look too out of the ordinary. It's got the typical colors, textures, and layout of your average middle-class Italian apartment complex, cream walls, tiled roof, ornate staircase. While I don't want to brag, I have to admit that we were living well below our means. If we really wanted, we could be living in one of those villas up on the

mountainside, but my parents wanted me to be super close to school. Uncle GioGio was quite generous with his wages, not to mention the countless gifts, presents and favors he's given my family (mostly me) over the years, so we definitely could've managed that. However, we were on the top floor, so there's a pretty sweet view.

I made my way into the car garage and walked over to the lobby entrance. The elevator ride was as boring as ever, I don't even remember it, so I won't bore you with that. Anyways, I got up to our floor and unlocked the apartment like I always do, walking down the main hallway and into the kitchen. Dinner wouldn't be for a long time, so I just grabbed some snacks out of the cupboard and stuffed my face. When I was satisfied with the amount of food in my stomach, I walked back to my room. I threw my school bag by my desk and lept on my bed, deciding that hey, I have time, I'll do my homework later. Still riding the high of riding Abbey for the first time, I blasted some music from my phone and opened my messages.

I probably texted something like 'hey, bitch' because that's usually how I initiated conversation with my best friend, Marina. For your information, her last name is Pantera. I don't know why you needed to know, but now you do. So I texted her and a few minutes later she fired back with something like 'what's up, asshole' or something equally as snarky. That's just how our friendship worked. We acted like we hated each other, but there was a really strong love beneath that hate. Not that kind of love, okay?

"You're never gonna believe what happened on the way home" I went, and she said "you found your brain?" and I was like "no, I just rode my goddamn Stand home from school. Beat that shit!" She knew about Stands then, in fact, hers manifested a long time before that day, due to unrelated events. We'll get to her Stand later though.

"Holy shit, dude! If I weren't in art right now, I'd wanna see it. I gotta get back to work, though, so bye for now." she replied, and so I just scrolled through the endless internet and listened to music for like, a couple more hours as teens tend to do. I totally forgot she had art that day, which sucked, because I really wanted to talk to her. So I'd been chilling out for a while when I heard the door open again and the familiar sound of heeled boots coming off and hitting the wall where all of our shoes were lined up.

I yelled out into the hallway "hello Mom" and waited until I heard a "hello son" from the living room. It was our tradition since I started walking home from school before I had a phone, because I'd usually get home before her unless she was working from home that day.

"I'm gonna start on dinner, you better be getting homework done or else you're helping me." That was my cue to shut up and pretend like I was working.

After some more fucking around on my phone and doing the occasional math problem if I felt like it, I got a text calling me out of my room to dinner. When I peeled myself off of my bed and opened the door, the smell of Mom's cooking hit me. Sure, she wasn't the best, but it's not like I didn't clean my plate every night either. I walked down the hallway and followed my nose to the dining room, where a couple dishes were already set up and waiting to be portioned out. I heard a clanging to my side so I turned to look at what made the noise.

Objectively, my mother was a beautiful woman. She was average height, fair, and had big, round eyes like you'd see on a doll. She had a youthful face, partly due to her actually being young and partly due to how well she took care of it. People said that I looked like her; specifically, that I had her thin, button nose. I didn't really agree, and still don't, because I think I look different than both of my parents, but I suppose others could see it more clearly than I. I guess I should call her Trish as I tell this story, but she's Mom to me, so that's what it's gonna be.

She was by the sink, concentrating on straining a large bowl of pasta. Without looking up, she told me that "your dad is going to be here soon, so put some dishes out, baby." I obediently walked behind her and bent over to retrieve some dishes, but apparently I didn't watch myself carefully enough because my big ass knocked one of my mother's wooden spoons off of its precarious position hanging off of the side of the counter. But before I could even yell "Mom", a glowing pink arm materialized from Mom's side, caught the spoon, and put it back on the counter. My eyes went wide and I whispered a silent "whoa".

I'd been around Stands all my life, but that doesn't mean I'd ever seen one. I knew all their names and what they did and I knew that it was their doing when things seemed to move on their own, but that moment was the first time I'd actually seen what one other than my own looked like, even if it was just an arm. It just blew my mind. These extremely powerful soul-beings who could do things like stop time and grow life from concrete, and Mom just used hers to clean up after her dumbass son!

"Watch your butt, clumsy boy!" my mom giggled as I stood up and put the stack of plates next to the pasta and sauces. When I went to walk around to her other side to serve myself, she spun around and put a hand on my shoulder, her soft, pink hair tickling my nose. She put a hand on my cheek and stood up on her toes like she always did when she wanted to kiss me. I tried to scoot by her but despite her feminine appearance, that woman was strong as hell.

"Where are you going? I haven't seen you all day, you're not getting out of this," she teased, pecking my cheek. I rolled my eyes, but the smile on my face showed how much I appreciated her affection.

"So when's Dad going to be home?" I asked, just as I heard the door down the hall open and shut. Mom smirked and cocked an eyebrow at me, flicking her green eyes to the plates that still needed food on them. Oh, she thought she was so funny.

"Get in here, dinner is still hot," she said in a raised voice, patting my back as she brought out some more things to the table. As I filled the plates, I heard footsteps round the corner and walk into the dining room. I paused for a bit and looked into the room just as my father came out from behind the wall and threw his arms around Mom from behind as she was turning to go get more plates.

"What did I just say? Go and get your food while it's hot, I worked so hard-" Mom exclaimed between fits of laughter as Dad practically assaulted her with kisses and tickles. It would have been cute if I weren't so hungry.

"Yeah, get your ass in here so we can sit down," I added. My dad's attention turned to me, his dark eyes seeming to hide behind the hair he really should have cut. He went straight for me with this smirk on his face, a smirk that said "damn, I'm proud of you".

"You watch your mouth in front of your mother, boy," he chuckled as we embraced, then leaning in closer to whisper "hey, kid. Good to see you." I squeezed him hard in return. I always remember thinking "this guy gets me" when I think about Dad. There's something so inherently relatable and lovable about his simplicity.

"You, me, rematch. Tonight." I reminded him as we both went to go get our food. We liked to play video games together, and I think he may have cheated the last time we played then so I was itching for a rematch.

"Be prepared to regret that, I'm going to wipe the floor with you," Dad replied in passing, walking back to the table and sitting down at his usual spot, which was facing the hallway. He always said it was because he liked to look at the family pictures in the hall behind us, but I was not gullible

then and certainly not now. I think we've only ever been attacked in our own home once, I had to have been three or four, but once was all it took. Whether it be his boss, who is my godfather Uncle GioGio, or his immediate family, he was fiercely protective.

"My God, there's barely any left for me! Are you two boys bottomless pits or something?" Mom remarked, following the two of us to the table.

"Oh, sorry love, did you want me to-" Dad tried to offer but she shut him down.

"No, no, you keep it. I'm okay." Then, she sat down and we were all finally able to eat. I was stuffing my face with no time to talk when Mom goes "so did anything interesting happen at school today, Bruno?" And I thought for a good minute before I was like "well, my Stand manifested today, so there's that."

When I said that, Dad's eyes went wide with giddy excitement and Mom smiled warmly.

"Bullshit! Are you serious? That's awesome, baby!" my dad went, catching a side-eye from Mom, probably about his language at the dinner table, but even she quickly returned to her warm smile.

"Could you show us?" She asked. That made me laugh a bit. "No, not now. It's way too big to fit in here." This comment got another excited reaction out of the both of them.

"That's insane. You're insane! Have you called your Uncle Giorno yet and told him?" Dad asked, and obviously I replied that no I hadn't, and Dad said that he'd call after dinner. Then, a weird look came across Mom's face.

"I'm just confused. Why would it manifest now of all times? Just a week after your seventeenth birthday? It seems weird to me." Mom pondered. Now that I think back on it, it certainly was weird, but I was too excited to think about it critically then.

"Wait- does this mean you can see our Stands?" Dad asked, and I nodded.

"Yeah, I saw Mom's Spice Girl when we were preparing dinner. Just the arm though. She caught a spoon midair." Mom picked up her fork and tried to take another bite to hide the blush of pride on her cheeks, but I saw it and I knew she was proud of herself for looking so cool in front of me.

"So can you see those?" Dad asked. Just when I was about to reply that I had no idea what he was talking about, I felt something on my hand, and when I looked down, there were six small, yellow creatures around my plate, a few of which were hugging or otherwise touching my hand.

"Sex Pistols! Of course! What's up, guys?" I asked the mischievous little things, and the three of us humans laughed. We all finished our meals a bit later, in better moods than we started the night off in, if you could believe it.

After dinner, Dad and I hopped online to play some games. We got kind of carried away and perhaps a bit wine-drunk, because it was close to 1 at night when Mom walked into the room with her hand on her hip and her hair up. With a tired smile, she leaned against the wall and softly called out to us.

"Boys... it's time to go to sleep-"

"Son of a bitch!" One of us yelled.

"How the hell are you doing that?! Who is on your team?!" The other replied.



"Boys..."

"Damn you! Did you just kill me? Come here!" Dad growled, grabbing me and ruffling my hair quite aggressively. I let go of my controller and tried to reach his hat to yank it off but that asshole had me in such a way I couldn't reach it. We struggled for a bit more before Mom's voice cut through the commotion again.

"Boys. Bed. Both of you!" That voice meant business, and we knew that. Dad let me go with a sheepish smile to his wife, who returned the favor with a very unimpressed deadpan face. When I stood up to go get ready for bed, my dad's voice got my attention.

"Hey, this," he gestured to the television as he turned it off, "is not over, and I will get you back." I shook my head like "no, you won't, but keep thinking that". Mom gave me a pat on the shoulder as I walked past, ensuring I was on my way. I turned around one last time just in time to see Dad pick up his phone and his face fall into concern. I wondered what that was about, but I didn't go back and ask. I'd get my answer soon enough anyways.

I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth, and while the water ran, I heard a low murmur. I finished up, but for some reason, I didn't leave and hid behind the door. Through the crack, I could see my parents in the hallway in front of the door to their room. Their voices were hushed, but I was able to catch the end of the conversation.

"-understand, but I'm worried about Bruno. If whoever took him realizes you're going after them, they could go after Bruno as retaliation." That was Mom.

"Hey, relax. No one's going to go after him. Besides, he's got his Stand now. Whatever it does, it will protect him." Something was bothering my dad. He wasn't the type to freak out, but I could still hear it in his voice.

"He's just a kid, honey, I don't feel comfortable leaving him," Mom replied, wrapping her arms around herself. I disagreed, but kept listening anyway.

"Trish, he's not a kid, he's practically an adult already." (Retroactive thank you, Dad) "And what were we doing at his age? Things way more dangerous than staying at home alone."

"Three good men died back then, do you not remember? Four, counting Polnareff. I just- I don't want him going through what I went through, what we went through." Then she covered her face with her hands and sighed. Dad embraced her, patting her back as she took a moment to recompose herself. It was a rare sight to see her in such a way because she always tried to have this really badass, strong presence when I was around.

When she stood back up straight again, she stood stiff for a few seconds before reaching up with a lightning fast arm and sliding Dad's hat off of his head, trying really hard to contain her laughter as she fought to keep it from him. That just made her laughter come out like snorts, though.

"I knew you were gonna fucking try something! Give that back, you sneaky bitch!" Dad hissed at her, barely containing his own laughter. She was doing a pretty good job of dodging him until he grabbed her waist and just kissed her, essentially admitting he lost the game. Mom put the hat on her own head and wiggled triumphantly as she freed herself. I averted my eyes in your stereotypical teenage disgust, but even I knew that the way they played together after all this time was adorable as hell.

"Let's go get that asshole. I just have to say goodbye to our son before I go," Mom whispered, and I took that as my cue to sneak out of the bathroom and quietly slip into bed, clothes and all. Just as I'd

made it convincing enough, I heard her soft footsteps by the side of my bed and felt her warm kiss in my hair. Then, as soon as she had appeared, she vanished down the hallway, and I heard the apartment door open and shut a few minutes later. I got out of bed and changed into more comfortable bedclothes, and not fifteen minutes later I was out like a light.

## That's What They Call Her

I woke up the next morning like I always did, tired and already over it. I slapped my alarm off- why do they make alarm clocks with the most annoying sounds on the planet, by the way?- and dragged my half-asleep body out of bed. I got dressed, brushed my teeth, and took a piss before I gathered my school stuff and made my way into the kitchen for some breakfast.

So I walked into the kitchen and I saw on the counter there was a piece of paper with some writing on it. I actually still have it, kinda dumb but I held onto it. Here's what the note said.

"Good morning Bruno, I hope you slept well. Something has happened to your uncle Giorno, it's probably nothing, but your father and I wanted to go and check it out. I'll text you before school starts and in between breaks to let you know we're safe and to check in on you. If you need anything we'll both have our phones on us. We love you so much, and if we're not back by tonight you can stay the night at a friend's or invite some people over. No parties. Mom and Dad."

I rolled my eyes as I put the note in my pocket. That last part had different handwriting- Dad added that part to Mom's beautiful note last minute, probably as a dig because he knows damn well I have like, two friends. But whatever. After that, I just grabbed some toast with some olive butter- which is amazing- and ducked out of the apartment.

I had walked about halfway to school when I was like "oh shit. I can just ride Abbey Road to school and get there super fast." So I stopped, put my hands out and went "okay, Abbey Road! Take me to school!" and this giant horse leapt out of, well, me, and just hovered on the path. I gave it a look and took a running start up to its side so I could get on easier. When I was comfortable, the beast took off down the path. It was still a rush to ride it the second time, but I kept my excitement to myself. As I neared the school grounds, Abbey slowed to a trot just when I felt a vibration in my pocket where I had put my phone. I pulled it out, thinking it was my mom, but it was a text from my best friend, Marina.

"Yo, asshole! You here yet?" I scoffed and wrote back "duh" and she goes "I don't see you, are you at our normal spot?" I looked up to see where I was, and sure enough I was coming up on the little spot behind one of the buildings where we always met up before class. She was leaning against the wall, trying to shield herself from the light wind.

While I wasn't interested at all, I admit Marina was a very pretty girl. Her sass was amplified by her rebelliously short haircut and chunky dye job. She usually wore a baggy shirt and tight pants or a skirt so that she could show off her belly button piercing to whoever asked. She had the most piercing dark blue eyes with a little ring of sky blue around the middle and a pale face. She was painfully honest, but she had a great sense of humor. That's why we got along so well.

"Look up" I said and waited for the text to go to her. I could tell it did when her head shot up and we made eye contact. Her mouth fell open as she trotted over to me.

"No way! That's your Stand? He's fucking awesome! But Jesus Christ put that thing away or else people will think something is up!" She hissed in a whisper. I sighed and dismounted, watching Abbey fade back into me.

"Yeah, it's called Abbey Road. It's kinda cool, I guess," I replied, knowing that Abbey Road was very cool. She snorted and turned to walk to our classroom when I called out to her.

"One second, Marina. I have to take care of something." I pulled out my phone and found my conversation with my mom.

"D'aww, does the baby have to call his mommy?" Marina teased, not being serious at all. I laughed and showed her my phone screen.

"Actually, yeah. She and Dad went out late last night and they haven't come back, and she said she was gonna text me but she hasn't. I'm just checking to make sure she's okay." I said as I turned the screen back to me and began to text.

"Mom? School has almost started. You forgot to text me!" I wrote. I waited a few moments for the indication she had read it and would be texting back like she usually did, but it didn't come. Confused, I put my phone away and walked with Marina to class.

I didn't really like school, especially English class. I absolutely hate the language and really only use it for memes. But it's the curriculum and my parents wanted me to be fluent, so there I was. Anyways, I took out my phone in class to see if my mom had texted me, and she hadn't. This weird, sinking feeling dug into me and I shot a text to Marina.

"Hey, I've got a bad feeling about something. Want to ditch with me?" And I waited until she got it and responded.

"Where are we going?" That's why I love her as a best friend. Never "if", always "when" or "where".

"We should go check out the base. Someone there has to know where they went." I texted back. We both excused ourselves from the room on some excuse I can barely remember and high tailed it off of school grounds before anyone saw us. When we were far enough away, I summoned my new best horse friend and got on, motioning for Marina to jump on. She gave me a funny look and I laughed.

"Sorry, I forgot you were short for a second. Here, Abbey, could you help her up?" I asked the Stand, to which it huffed and knelt down onto its front knee-thingsies. When Marina had hopped on, Abbey stood back up and galloped down the street as normal.

"Are we sure you should be riding your Stand out in the open like this? It could attract the attention of other users," Marina warned me, but I knew better.

"Oh, please, I would be in more danger if I took my car." I replied. While I don't mean to brag, Uncle GioGio got me a really sweet exclusive Lamborghini Sián for my sixteenth birthday for when I can drive, which will be this year (with supervision of course.) He said he was going to save it for my eighteenth but he just couldn't wait to give it to me. It's sitting in one of his garages now, all pink and sexy looking with my name written all over it in the metaphorical sense. What I'm trying to say is a lot of people would want to hurt me to get my car.

"Whatever, but if we die I get to say 'I told you so.'"" Marina spat back. I shook my head and muttered something about her being a crazy bitch, which she probably didn't hear over the sound of the wind rushing past us.

We plodded on for a bit more, not quite a kilometre if I had to guess, before we came to a narrow street that would have descended down to the beach if we had gone down it. We dismounted Abbey and walked down a bit until we came to an old-looking door. I'd been to this place before with Mom and Dad, so I knew to use this back alley entrance rather than the front one facing the street. I knocked on the door and waited until I heard footsteps approach the door.

"Do you know the password?" A gruff, raspy voice asked from the other side of the door. I recognized the voice and chuckled.

"Is it 'I'm the boss's godson, Bruno Leone Mista, and if you don't let me in I will tell him about this injustice the next time I see him', Vanzetti?" I purred. I'd love to say using my family to my advantage pains my innocent and empathetic soul, but it doesn't. I get what I want! The man on the other side of the door, who was one of Uncle GioGio's personal security guards named Vanzetti, sighed and opened the door. I trotted in, probably with a shit-eating grin on my face, and was about to make my way to the stairs when Vanzetti called back to me.

"Hey, kid. Who's she?" He asked. I smirked and said "oh she's my best friend, Marina. Don't worry, she knows about everything." His dark eyebrows furrowed as he fiddled with his coat sleeves.

"She does? You sure your godfather is okay with that?" The taller, wider set man asked. I nodded and walked back to them, taking her arm.

"Yes, she's sworn to secrecy and knows that if she were to say anything to anyone, even her parents, that she'd be instantly eliminated. She's cool with it." I affirmed, and Marina nodded to confirm my statement. Vanzetti's eyes widened for a moment and then returned to normal.

"Okay, kid. Are you heading upstairs? You know your godfather isn't here, right?" He asked.

"Yeah, that's why I'm here. I have to go talk to Mister Polnareff about Uncle GioGio," I replied, walking up the stairs with Marina. When we walked up the stairs, a familiar accented voice called out to us in English from the desk by the window.

"Bruno, is that you?"

I elbowed Marina in the side with a grin, because I knew she was gonna get an absolute kick out of this, and shouted back "Hello, Mister Polnareff!" in my native Italian. When we reached the top of the ornate spiral stairs, Marina took a look around, confused, before I pointed to the small green turtle on the corner of the desk. She gave me a 'what the fuck are you talking about' face before Polnareff spoke again and caused her to yelp in surprise.

"Bruno, in English, please, I don't speak Italian. And introduce me to your friend, its only polite," he chastised. I rolled my eyes and switched languages.

"You've lived here for like, thirty years, and you're a smart man. Surely you know "buongiorno" by now. And this is Marina. She's cool." Marina just stared at him dumbfounded.

"But anyways, I have some questions," I said as I sat down on one of the velvet stools around the room, motioning for the stunned Marina to sit next to me. The turtle turned its head to follow.

"What a coincidence, because I have some answers," the man inside the turtle said in a serious tone, which was quite unlike him. I felt a tug on my clothes.

"Did that turtle just talk?" Marina whispered in my ear.

"Well yes, but actually no. The man inside it did. I'll explain later. Point is, Mister Polnareff, my parents haven't texted me when they said they would and I have a really bad feeling. Do you know where they went?" I asked, taking out my phone to try and call my parents again.

"The most I can tell you is that they went after Giorgio, who went missing last night. I don't know who told your parents, but your mother and father thought it was a big deal, because they thought it necessary to go after Giorgio and take the Arrow with them. I tried to tell them not to, but you know

them. Those crazy kids never listen to anyone except your godfather. But I mean, they could need it for all I know, with all these attacks happening all over Italy, you never know if there's someone powerful enough to warrant it."

I sat up, confused. "Hold on, you can't just drop that bombshell and not tell me what you mean. What attacks? Are my parents in danger?" Polnareff sighed before turning his dark eyes back to us.

"Over the past few months, there have been reports of members of the organization being subject to... attacks. Those who were recovered and could speak said that it felt like their Stands were purposefully disobeying them. There's a rumor in the ranks that a Stand somewhere in Italy has the ability to sever the bond between Stand and user when it attacks. I think that Giorno's disappearance could be connected," Polnareff explained.

"Could be?" Mister Polnareff, I'm sure Uncle GioGio went to investigate this. What was his last known location?" I asked. Polnareff thought for a moment and then replied with

"He was supposed to take a train to a destination and never messaged me that he had gotten on. I don't condone two children skipping school like this, but if you were to go looking for them, I'd say look for clues on the way to the nearest station from here. Chances are something happened before then. The guard he was traveling with didn't make it back either. Perhaps you could search for him as well."

I inhaled, taking in all that information. "Okay, we can do a search of the area on the way there. Let me just try my parents one last time first," I said, tapping my mom's contact. The phone rang once, twice, three times, and then I heard her.

"Hello, this is Trish, I'm so sorry I couldn't answer the phone, leave a message and in a few minutes I'll try and call you back. Take care." then my phone beeped to signify that I should leave a message. I just hung up and tried my dad.

"Hey, you've reached Mista. For some reason I'm not at my phone right now, but I'll call back shortly! Oh, and leave a message if you-" I hung up before the whole message had played, looking up in worry.

"They're not answering. Marina, let's go." I barked as I stood up, causing Marina to get up as well. As I walked out of the room and started down the stairs, I yelled "Oh! I forgot to tell you! Mister Polnareff, I have my Stand now! I'll show you all when we get back!" and laughed as I heard him stutter in confusion as we flew down the stairs.

Within minutes, the two of us were back on Abbey Road, following Google for the route to the station. I was enjoying myself up front when I felt Marina tap my shoulder and yell into the wind "So who was that?"

"That was Polnareff. Long story short, dude trapped himself in a turtle when my crazy ass grandfather was trying to kill him, my mom, and everyone else about twenty seven years ago in Rome. He actually knew my...uh...-would the proper phrase be 'cousin'?- Jotaro. Uncle GioGio's family tree is fucked up. Anyways, he went on a mission to kill Uncle GioGio's dad in the eighties because he was a Stand-using vampire with the ability to stop time. I can't believe I've never told you that story before."

"Stand-using vampi- Christ, does everyone in your family have daddy issues?" Marina shouted and I snickered.

"I don't! I fucking love my dad! But it is odd, isn't it?"

And so we chatted like that for a couple kilometres, making sure to keep our eyes out for any suspicious things. It seemed like we were coming up empty until we headed down a street and I felt an odd sensation on my chest. I looked down just in time to see my lucky zipper pop off of my clothing and fall beside us. Abbey Road came to an abrupt halt as I dismounted and tried to look for the damn thing. It looked like it had landed in some bushes a bit off the path, so as I bent down to search the bush, I saw the leaves were dappled with blood. I looked closer and farther into the patch of bushes populating the alley, and what did I see but a fucking person in a dark suit bleeding out beneath the shrubbery!

"Holy shit, Marina! Someone's in the bushes!" I screamed.

"Paint it Black!" Marina yelled as her chunky boots hit the ground. From her body, a green aura shone brightly as a pad of artist's paper and a pencil faded into existence beside her. I'd never seen her Stand before, nor had I seen her bright green aura. The large, glowing pad of paper with a matching green pen interested me a bit more than the bleeding guy on the ground, but that didn't stop me from approaching him.

The man was short, blonde and tucked away in a shaded area, concealed by bushes. No pedestrian could have seen him unless they were extremely tall for some reason. Marina hopped over the bushes and began pulling out glowing green bandages from her Stand to apply to the man's wounds.

"Marina, how do we know this is the right man? And how did you get those bandages?" I asked cautiously as Marina knelt down to help the guy.

"I drew them a long time ago. Never know when you'll need bandages," she replied, "holy shit, this guy has really been through it." I approached slowly and as I did, the man's face became more recognizable to me. He looked to be one of Uncle GioGio's men, especially because of the ladybug pin he was wearing on his lapel. That was the little mark of GioGio's elite. My dad had one, too. I had been so fascinated with the brooch that when the man looked up at me with his dark purple eyes I yelled in shock.

"Bruno? You shouldn't be here," the man whispered. My eyebrows furrowed.

"What's going on? What happened to you?" I asked. The man coughed and gasped for breath before answering.

"I was accompanying the boss to the train station when I saw some people in black cars following us from the beach-side headquarters. He told me to be calm and give your parents a message. But those guys- they were Stand users. Not just any Stand users. They jumped out of the car and cut us with these..." the man paused to slightly raise his arm, revealing a dark pink arrow nestled beneath his skin. The energy coming off of the object... it wasn't technology or magic. It was a Stand itself!

"We tried to fight back, but neither of our Stands manifested. It was an easy win for them, even against Giorno. He's strong as hell, but we were outnumbered and heavily disadvantaged. They threw me against the wall and interrogated me. One man- the others called him Libra- had a Stand that made it not only impossible to lie, but impossible to hide any information. I told him about your parents, how they were coming. They beat me within an inch of my life and left me to bleed out here while they waited for your parents," the man rasped, then fell silent. I shook him.

"Tell us more, sir! Do you know where they're taking them?" The man huffed and grabbed my arm as he winced in pain from Marina's bandaging.

"They're taking them to someone. The Red Mother, that's what they call her. She wants them. But

they know that the organization knows Giorno is missing and where he was last seen. I heard them talking... they're going to try and shake any pursuers by exchanging the hostages with each other at different points in the journey, like a zigzag, so their final destination is not clear. Please, Bruno, you have to find your parents, or The Red Mother, or both, before they meet each other. I don't know what she wants with them, but I worry for their safety."

I sat back, bewildered.

"If they're going to try and confuse any pursuers, how can we find where they're going? We're Stand users, we're not psychic! And we-" As I moved, my finger brushed something cold on the ground.

"Hold on," I whispered, picking up the gold zipper on the ground, "this zipper... Uncle GioGio told me it was special. Without it, we wouldn't have found you. Maybe... maybe the zipper will tell us where to go." Marina laughed as she helped the man sit upright against the brick wall.

"You know what? This day has already been so fucking weird. Maybe this zipper plan of yours just might work, Bruno."



# Pisces and Aquarius

## Chapter Summary

The party gets started for real this time!

So we were off, bouncing through the city on Abbey Road with no real direction to go in. I was praying that the little zipper I held in my hand would tell us where to go but it didn't say shit for a while.

The ride was okay, we found little alleys and things to duck into so we didn't attract too much attention to ourselves. I remember getting kinda hungry so I asked Marine if we could stop for some food, but she reminded me that we were on a rescue mission and we should put as much distance behind us as possible, but then I spat back that we had no idea where the fuck we were supposed to go, anyways, so it didn't really matter.

And so we stopped for a minute at a cafe on the outskirts of the city for coffee and some snacks. We both got some dirty looks from adults probably wondering what two teens were doing out of school at this time, but we didn't really care. I had a chance to eat and so I was happy.

When we were done eating, I summoned Abbey Road again and the two of us rode off farther out from the main city. It was fun to watch the cramped streets and crowded buildings widen a bit and more green creep in from the landscape. But that comfortable feeling didn't last too long.

So we were just plodding along and I got this really strange feeling, like I was being watched. Marina was on edge too, I could feel her hands tense up on my shoulders.

"Do you feel that? It's another Stand user. What else could it be?" I asked rhetorically, scanning the street for people that may be suspicious.

"Yeah, Stand users can sense each other, right? So that's probably what we're sensing. But does that mean that they can sense us too?" Marina asked, her hair whipping me in the face as she turned to look as well.

"Ah shit," I whispered. She was right. But I didn't have much time to think about it. Because Abbey Road came to an abrupt halt, snorting and stamping its hooves. I looked out beyond its six ears to see someone in the road walking toward us.

Whoever was approaching was small, short and skinny at the same time. She wore a blue cape with a hood that obscured her face and shoulders. When it blew in the wind, I could see a blue swimsuit like material beneath the cloak.

"Ay, who are you? What's your name?" I yelled at the person in the road. Abbey Road brayed and made a few hops backwards, but I steadied it and leaned forward in anticipation.

"I'm not here to hurt you! I came as a warning." Her voice was high pitched, like a kid's, because it became clear that she was one. I hurriedly dismounted and walked out to meet her.

"Hey, girl, what's your name?" I asked again. The girl looked up at me and I could see that something was troubling her. Her purple eyes were filled with an emotion I couldn't place.

"They call me Pisces. That's all I can say. And I've come to give you a warning before you go any further." Pisces spoke. I felt Marina walk up beside me as backup.

"Continue," I said, curious that this was the second time of hearing about someone with a name corresponding to the zodiac star signs. Pisces shivered and clutched the button connected her cloak with her tan hands.

"The woman you are looking for, the one who kidnapped your parents, is not someone to mess with. She has done, and will do, awful things." Pisces looked up at me again. I furrowed my eyebrows.

"And you still follow her commands? Why?" I asked. This shit wasn't making any sense. The girl's face contorted in pain.

"I had no choice, boy! She- her Stand. It's an awful thing. It will take your Stand and then it will take your sanity. It's a feeling like...like watching someone you love die by your own hand." Large, heavy tears began to fall from her tan face. "My stand, Goodbye Girl, is not built for fighting, so there's nothing I can do in the way of combat to stop you from making this huge mistake, so all I can do is try and talk you out of it!"

"You're not going to fight us? What a fucking joke. I thought this was going to be like the adventures Dad and Uncle GioGio told me about." I scoffed, turning to Marina with an annoyed expression.

"The others won't be like me! You see, our group, the Red Mother's Lucky Stars, are ranked in loyalty. Ones like me are young, inexperienced, and have our loyalty based on fear alone. But there are others... there are others who actually believe the crazy things that horrible woman says," Pisces explained. "You can try and convince people to not fight you if you can prove that you will take down the Red Mother, but I have no idea how you'd ever be able to do that. I'm sure there are some who will agree to let you go, but for the ones that don't, prepare."

"How did she gain all these followers? How did she find you?" Marina asked. Putting her hands on her hips. Pisces shook her head.

"I don't know much about her past besides what she's elected to tell us, but a couple months ago she suddenly began to travel around the country, talking with people she called old friends. People previously affiliated with the mafia, or still affiliated. Then she'd..." Pisces paused.

"She would what?" I asked, pressing for more, because shit was getting interesting.

"Then she would demonstrate her powers and give us, the kids or grandkids of her old friends, a choice. No matter what choice we made we would follow her back to whichever of her hideouts was closest and await further instructions." Marina straightened up.

"So do you know where she is now?" Marina asked. Pisces shook her head and sighed.

"I haven't been face to face with her personally since we met. She knows I'm not loyal- if she finds out what I've been saying to you, I'm as good as dead and she'll need to find a new Pisces. She's already looking to fill one position as it is!" Pisces began to back away with this statement. Marina and I stepped closer to her to try and close the distance.

"What do you mean? Who is she looking for?" Marina said with her blue eyes narrowed. Pisces shifted uncomfortably.

"Recently she's been obsessed with finding the one she calls 'Ophiuchus', the thirteenth zodiac. She

says he or she will be the key to obtaining her goal and maintaining it. Don't ask me what that goal is, I have no idea. But I have... I have told you way more information than I was sent here to tell you. And I'm in big trouble as it is. All I'm saying is just please do not think that what you are doing will be easy or fun. If you continue on this path, it is absolutely certain that some people will be in grave danger and could even die. Be careful, and remember that trying to convince your enemies that you can help them out of their situation will be to your benefit before any kind of fighting." With that, Pisces turned and dashed down a side street.

Marina and I went to follow her, but by the time we turned the corner she was nowhere to be seen.

"Fuck. This is going to suck major ass. But regardless, we still don't have a freaking heading." I scoffed, looking down at the zipper in my hand. Marina put a hand on my shoulder and huffed.

"Well if it's not telling us to go any other direction, we must be going in the right way. That or this thing isn't possessed like we thought and we are going to be walking around forever while your parents meet a brutal end at the hands of a creepy cult leader."

I turned and growled at my friend.

"You're not fucking helping, you know. Come on, let's get back on Abbey Road and keep heading out of town."

And that is exactly what we did. We followed traffic out of one of the main routes from the city, northeast towards Caserta. We were careful to keep a low profile and stick to less crowded trails. The zipper hadn't put up any fuss since that guy, so I wasn't really worried about heading in the wrong direction.

After what felt like hours, I began to get a really odd feeling again. But it wasn't the same feeling I had when I felt Pisces. I felt really...light. Starting off, I thought it was just because I had been on the road for a while and I was starting to get a bit tired from carrying myself around, but it was a totally different kind of weightlessness than fatigue, so I was like "okay maybe something is up". And then I felt Abbey Road do this weird jump-step thing and when I looked at its feet to see what was going on, we were like, already a couple centimetres off of the ground! What the hell, right?

"Marina, we're fucking floating! It's like zero gravity or something!" I yelled.

"Yes, I can fucking see that!" she snapped back. She was floating off the back of the horse, with her hair going all every which-way. She looked a bit funny, and I stifled a laugh, until a voice behind us said matter-of-factly "not zero gravity. Density."

I whipped around and there, on the ground, was another girl. She was pale with light blue hair in two large braids that almost reached the ground, wearing an outfit covered in light purple and silver patterns. On her chest were two gold squiggly lines. They were the symbol of a zodiac sign, but I couldn't remember which one.

"You might want to grab onto that tree over there unless you want to be like Icarus and fly into the sun," the girl spoke again. From her voice and body she looked to be around my age, maybe a bit younger, but not like Pisces. Her eyes were orange and trained on us.

Taking her advice, the two of us kinda paddled over to the nearby tree and grabbed onto its branches, with Abbey Road fading back into me.

"My Stand. Wild is the Wind, can alter the density of any object," the girl said, kicking the dirt on the road with her foot, "right now, you're slightly lighter than air, so you're going to float like a

helium balloon." With that, a silver, purple and blue humanoid creature phased out of the girl's body and stood by her side with its arms crossed.

"Marina, can you summon your Stand and maybe draw a rope to tie us to the tree?" I asked impatiently, my grasp on the branch slipping. She growled at me.

"If I did that, I couldn't hold onto the branch, dumbass!" she hissed. I rolled my eyes and punched her in the shoulder, but I felt myself beginning to slip, so I hurriedly grabbed back onto the branch. The effect was getting worse; I could feel it becoming more and more difficult to hold on. I thought for a moment and then looked back at the girl on the ground.

"Hey, what's your name?" I asked, keeping my tone as calm as possible. The girl scoffed and tossed her long braids behind her shoulder.

"As if I'd tell you," came her snarky response. Marina tensed up.

"Can I beat the shit out of her? Please?" Marina whispered, and I shook my head no with a serious look on my face. I was going to try something.

"Well, my name is Bruno and this is my friend, Marina. We're seventeen years old. You must be close to that age, too, right?" I asked softly. I could see a crack in the girl's facade.

"I'm sixteen, what of it? I have you trapped, I could just stop you now. My job is to delay you, not to kill you," the girl mumbled. I swallowed and mustered up some fake tears.

"Well, I'm trying to rescue my mom and dad and my uncle. They're in danger and they're gonna get hurt if I don't stop them." The girl stared at the ground.

"What do I care? They're the enemy," she said, her Stand withdrawing back into her body. I could feel her powers lessening, it was working!

"Well, I don't know much about you or anything, but something tells me you really love your own parents and you were made to watch something be done to them, or maybe you were forced to do something to them yourself. Whatever it is, I know you're kicking yourself in the ass for it and it hurts you. I know the feeling. I want nothing more than to go back in time and stop my parents from making the dumbest mistake of their life- or second dumbest. The first dumbest is yours truly of course," I said, cracking a smile. I saw her shoulders shudder with a sob- or was it laughter? She looked back up at me with a smile on her face and tears in her eyes.

"Aquarius."

"What?"

"They call me Aquarius," the girl said, wiping her tears away. That was what the symbol was! At this point, I was able to put my feet below my head and hang somewhat upright.

"Well, it's nice to meet you, Aquarius," I answered back. Aquarius sighed and grabbed her long braids in her hands.

"Here, you can use these to guide you safely to the ground," she said, tossing them up to our hands. They hung in the air, so I'm guessing she used her Stand's power on them, as well. The two of us grabbed her braids and pulled on them, climbing until we were at a comfortable distance to the ground, and the effect of weightlessness went away.

"I'm so sorry... I was sent here to stop you. It's... it's all really confusing, and I'm kind of scared."

Aquarius said. I narrowed my eyes, as did Marina.

"Wait... do I hear an accent in your voice? What part of Italy are you from?" I asked her, equal parts curious and trying to convince her not to send us up into the stratosphere.

"Oh, I was raised on Sardegna." She replied, her silvery cheeks blushing.

"No shit! My grandfather was from there it seems!" I grinned, putting a knuckle on my hip. Marina rolled her eyes. Aquarius laughed and snorted.

"Really? Small world!" She nodded, her posture becoming more friendly.

"I mean yeah! Sure he was a crazy murdering lunatic, but I'm sure you're not all like that, are you?" I asked, raising an eyebrow comically high. She snorted with laughter, smacking her knee.

"You're really funny!" she laughed, then her face faded and she shut herself back in a bit. "But that doesn't change anything. You have to go, now, I've wasted your time as it is. Go, Bruno, and get your parents back!" Aquarius said as she pointed down the path. "I'm not sure where they'll be headed next, but I know it's somewhere north."

I smiled and patted my pocket. "Don't worry, we have our trusty little friend the zipper for that. I hope," I said to her, then turned up to the sky. "Uncle GioGio's friend, Bucciarati, if you're up there and you love me, you're gonna help us, right?" I offered a small prayer to the sky, then smacked my leg and jabbed a thumb behind me.

"Well... we really should... be off." I said awkwardly, taking a few steps backwards before turning around and tugging on Marina's arm. We had walked a few steps before Aquarius called out to us.

"Bruno, wait! One more thing! Please, whatever you do, get to your parents before they get to our boss. The Lucky Stars are doable. We're mostly kids. But the second you are in her range or the second you're attacked by her remote ability, you're done for. Believe me. It's an ability no Stand user should have," she said as we turned back around to face her, "Good luck, Bruno. I'd ask you to get revenge for my own folks, too, but it would be impossible. I wish you and your friend there all the best." She said before turning and walking back down the road she had come from.

Marina nodded her head in confirmation and turned back around, teasing me with "come on, lover boy, we've got a horse to ride and three middle-aged stand users to save."

"Right you are, my angry friend. Right you are." And then she elbowed me in the ribs.

# Enzo the Boat Kid

## Chapter Summary

New ally alert!

So by this point we had been walking or riding Abbey Road for literal hours and we were getting pretty tired. It wasn't too hot since it was October, but it was still humid, and we wanted a break but we couldn't just stop. This was a life-or-death type of deal, here, so we had to figure out another way.

We had been originally aiming to go northeast, but along the way we decided it would be a better bet if we just headed straight up to Roma- the chances that Roma is our final destination I thought were pretty high. So our travels took us up to Gaeta, which is a really pretty area about halfway between Napoli and Roma. It also has a very large port, which our new navigation route took us along.

"Do you think we can, like, taxi to Roma?" Marina asked as we walked along the small shops and cafes lining the docks. I shook my head, rubbing my legs which hurt from riding Abbey Road for so long.

"Don't they have some sort of policy about taking minors now? Besides, cars and license plates are really easy to follow. There could be users anywhere. It would be safer if we went by boat- plus I'm sure we could get a really good deal." I said in response. As we passed by a street that led down to the docks, I felt a tug in my pocket and reached into it.

"The zipper says we go that way," I remarked, taking out the small gold charm and holding it out in front of me like one of those dowsing rod things. We took the path down the small cobbled street and ended up in front of a couple rows of parked boats.

Marina looked out at the boats and nodded. "Great. Boats. Does that magic zipper of yours tell you, by any chance, which will get us the best deal?"

"I really appreciate your attitude, I really do. Very helpful. And to answer your question, it's stopped moving, so no," I fired back at her, "I think the smartest move is the easiest one- let's just check the smaller ones closest to us and see if there's anyone on board. And no tour boats or any of that shit- I may be rich but I'm not getting ripped off."

Off we searched, walking up and down the docks and calling out to try and get someone to come out. The first dock was a flop, so we moved onto the dock next to it.

"Hey, is there anyone aboard?" I called out in front of a small motorboat with the words "O Fortuna" written in script on the side. To our surprise, we got a response.

"There sure is! Why, am I parked illegally?" a juvenile, raspy voice answered. A figure popped up from the side of the boat, evidently because he was bent over looking at something. The kid looked slightly older than me, with dirty blonde hair poking out from underneath a light gray gondolier's hat that had a long red ribbon on it. His outfit was similarly gray and red themed, except his lipstick, which was oddly blue. When he saw Marina and I, confusion flashed briefly

across his tan face.

I exchanged a quick look with Marina before I went "Um, no, we don't work for the port. We were hoping to charter a boat, if you know anyone who is willing to take us." The kid smiled awkwardly and gestured behind him.

"Well, gosh, I could take you! I'm gonna have to charge, though."

"Do you take PayPal or Venmo or something? Also- do you have a boating license? You seem really young." I asked, climbing aboard the boat with Marina behind me. The kid laughed and stuck out his hand.

"I'm a very experienced driver, if that's what you mean. My name is Enzo, and yes I do take PayPal," He said, extending his hand to me. I shook his hand.

"Bruno. And that one is Marina," I responded. Enzo nodded and walked down the boat towards the wheel and gestured for us to sit down.

"So where are we headed?" Enzo asked.

"Roma."

"Any particular reason?"

"Um, there's a lot of shit in Roma, yeah? We have a few things to take care of," was all the excuse I managed to scrounge together. That seemed to please him, and he started the engine and began to pull out of his spot along the dock.

"You two a thing or no?" was the next question. Marina visibly cringed and I laughed.

"No, she's a bitch- and a good friend." I couldn't help myself and got a smack from her in response. I deserved it. She snorted.

"So funny how you go anywhere with a person of the opposite sex and people immediately assume you're fucking. It's 2028 people, where's the representation?" Marina joked.

Enzo grinned at her words, leaving the port and venturing out into the open sea.

We were all silent for a few minutes before I heard Marina shout back at Enzo.

"So what is your story? You look about our age, no? How come you're out on your own, ferrying people around Italy?"

Enzo pushed a few buttons before leaning back in his chair, one hand on his hat to keep it from flying off.

"Well, I grew up in Venezia with my father. He was a gondolier, taking tourists around and helping out the locals. I mean- he wasn't my biological father. I was adopted. My biological parents were foreigners that left me here on purpose."

"Damn. That's harsh," I said awkwardly, thinking of my mom and dad. They'd never leave me.

"No, it's okay. Anyways, I grew up entertaining the guests that my father ferried across the canals. I just loved to hear people's stories. He taught me how to fish, and this boat was his greatest possession."

I thought this was a bit strange, but then again, I had lived a very strange life myself.

"Now, here's where the story gets interesting- and sad. One day, when I was nine or ten, this group of three or four guys asked my father to take them across the canal. It was an awfully foggy day out on the water that morning, so I couldn't really see them as they disappeared off of the bank- but then I heard a gunshot and I knew it was all over. So I took this boat and fled here, where I've been living out the rest of my days ferrying around lovely folks like you and playing music in the streets for cash!"

His face looked down in sorrow for a brief moment before looking back out at the sea. Marina tried to brush some of her hair out of her face.

I spoke and broke the silence. "So why do you think they did it?" I asked harmlessly. Mistake one right there. Enzo's face got this devious yet sullen grin on it as he got ready to answer my question.

"Listen, you didn't hear this from me, but I really think it was the mafia. Who else to carry out a hit like that than those dirty lowlifes?" He said. I furrowed my eyebrows, feeling a couple conflicting emotions.

"That's strange, Venezia is in Passione's territory..." I thought quietly out loud to Marina. Mistake number two. Immediately I sensed a change in Enzo's temperament.

"What did you say?" He asked. Apparently I had spoken loud enough that he heard me. I could feel my cheeks heat up as I tried to play it off.

"I didn't say anything! Did you hear something?" I said dumbly. I could feel the boat slowing down. Marina swallowed her spit and looked out to sea.

"Do you know something about my father's death, somehow?" Enzo pressed, slowing the boat until it was almost still.

I was like "What? You're being ridiculous. That's-" but he cut me off.

"Are you two in the mafia?" Damn. Straight to the point, eh?

Then dumbass me blurted out "Well, my father-" before I shut myself up. Mistake number three! If Uncle GioGio had heard what I'd said, oh God, I'd be fucked.

I'd been so caught up in reading Enzo's face and mentally shaming myself for my utter stupidity that I hadn't noticed the boat's motor purring had become replaced with a vibration of a different kind. I locked eyes with Marina. We were both thinking the same thing: Stand.

"Whoa, man, I don't want any trouble and I have no idea who killed your father. Just get us to Roma like you agreed," I tried to negotiate. Enzo stepped out from behind the wheel, an orange glowing aura appearing around his body.

"I can't believe I didn't sense it before- he's a Stand user!" Marina shouted, summoning her own green aura and grabbing her sketchbook out of the air. My pinkish-purple aura sprung to life as well as I got ready to summon Abbey Road and figure out how the fuck we are supposed to get off of this boat.

"So that's what they're called, 'Stands'. I thought I was the only one," Enzo said, "When I was trembling from my father's death, I felt the Earth tremble with me. This is my power, I guess."

Then, a figure materialized from is back. It was mostly pink with gold plating, and had red rib-like



structures in a few places. It wore a gold hat with a large pink feather. Before I had any time to react, The thing emitted this...noise that made my head feel all fuzzy. The boat shook and spun around in circles as the water around it seemed to dance. The rib-like structures on the Stand rattled and hummed, being the source of the weird sound.

Marina was knocked off balance and fell to the ground, her sketchbook falling out of her hand. I was backed up against the railing of the boat, my head still kind of hurting from the noise. I took a breath to recover and clear my head before I screamed for Abbey Road.

The Stand shot out of my aura like it had been waiting its whole life to finally beat some Stand ass and reared up in front of me. It swiped at Enzo and his Stand, landing a few hits on its arms and chest before the damn thing grabbed Abbey's front hooves and began to vibrate again. That weird sensation crawled up through my hands again and I just couldn't move no matter how much I tried. Right when I thought the vibrations were over I felt something hit my chest really fast and before I knew it I was flying through the air, sailing over the edge of the boat.

In that few moments I was flying through the air, I indicated two points in space, one just above the water and one above me, to create a loop in. I fell into the loop and essentially began to fall forever. I let myself build up a lot of speed before flipping right-side up and terminating the loop, smacking the surface of the water with my feet and with a little more help from Abbey Road, I launched myself up over the boats railing and back on deck.

When I came up over the railing, I saw Marina had Enzo's Stand restrained with a glowing green rope, but the Stand still vibrated and was causing her visible distress.

"Call off your Stand! We just want to talk!" I screamed, landing on deck atop Abbey Road. It snorted and charged at Enzo, who was struggling while his Stand was restrained. The large horse-like creature reared up once more, knocking Enzo and his Stand to the ground and placing a hoof on top of the vibrating Stand's chest cavity. Enzo wheezed and choked out a small "Okay! Okay!"

I withdrew Abbey Road and Marina withdrew Paint it Black as Enzo stood up, still coughing.

"Raspberry Beret, you can go now," He said as his Stand disappeared. He looked at us with curious eyes, and I could totally tell he wanted to hear what we had to say.

"Listen to me. You want to know the real reason we are headed to Roma?" I asked, still on guard. Enzo nodded slightly, moving toward the steering compartment of the boat.

"It's my parents. They were kidnapped and I'm trying to find them before it's too late. We think we could track them down in Roma. I know how you must have felt when you lost your father. Do you want to give me that feeling?" It was a risky play, but I had to try.

Enzo shook his head. "No, I don't. But that doesn't change the fact that those men -your father- have done some horrible things that shouldn't be ignored."

Marina stepped in front of me. "Hey, take this from someone who grew up in a normal family. Bruno's father may be a gangster, but he's the most honorable man I know. He wouldn't ever do anything if he didn't believe it to be right. And he is second in command of the whole operation, so if your dad really was the kind-hearted soul you say he was, those guys who killed him would have been severely punished if not killed themselves."

That explanation seemed to satisfy the blonde kid, as he relaxed a bit as he stood. "I guess that makes sense in a way," he mumbled before furrowing his eyebrows and snapping back up to look at me.

"Wait a minute- did you say 'second in command'? You're serious?" I gave Marina a small nudge for letting that one slip out.

"Yeah, it's true. But it doesn't matter. What matters is that he's in danger- so are my mom and my godfather. I have to get to them," I tried to steer away from that topic of conversation. Enzo looked at me with a determined stare.

"I'm coming with you two."

I widened my eyes in surprise. "Hold on, what? You're going to go with us?" Enzo nodded curtly and sat back down in his captain's chair, revving the boat's engine.

"Hey, if I can't bring back my dad, helping to save someone else's is the next best thing. You guys seem like nice people. You wouldn't mind if I tagged along, would you?"

I looked at Marina and we both had a mental conversation as best friends are known to do, searching each other's eyes for answers. With our minds made up, we turned back to Enzo.

"Sure, man, we would love the help," I replied. Enzo smiled and tipped his hat.

"Perfect! Now sit down you two, or else you're going to go flying!" He shouted, pushing the boat forward as Marina and I sat down. And with that, we were finally off toward the great city of Roma.

## Gemini and Cancer

We landed in Roma just as the sun began to dip in the sky. When we pulled into the port, Marina and I worked our way off of the boat and Enzo was close behind. "Yo," he went, "I have to tie up the boat and check up on a few things with the coast guard. I'll be right behind you, keep on going."

"You have a phone right? Let's exchange numbers so we know where to go before we split up," Marina said, taking her phone out. I nodded in approval.

"Congratulations, your one brain cell came up with a good idea!" I joked, taking out my phone as well. We exchanged numbers and Marina and I headed off of the docs and into the city.

We walked inland for a few minutes until I came to a stop along one of the less crowded street and grabbed Marina's arm to stop her.

"Hey that whole phone thing gave me an idea. Let's split up and see if we can find any more information on my parents. Keep quiet, and look for suspicious black cars. It's a long shot, but it can't hurt to try," I offered. Marina gave me one of her looks, but agreed.

"I trust you, dude. I'll go uh... that way." She pointed up a main street and started down it. I watched her go to make sure she was okay before starting down another street.

For a while it was just me and my thoughts. I looked around at each side of the street, at the small cars passing slowly by, and the people walking past me. No one stood out in particular, but I did find it strange when I saw someone sneak a glance at me from a coffee shop, though people observing strangers as they passed was nothing too special. At least, that's what I thought.

"Man, what am I doing? I'm so far from home. I can see the sun about to go down. I don't know where we're gonna sleep or for how long or what. This whole trip was a bad idea," said a voice in my head. I furrowed my eyebrows and thought that over. I guessed it was a bit dumb of me to go on this journey.

"Mom and Dad and Uncle have probably already defeated the Red Mother and are on their way back. This trip was probably a waste. I need to go back." The voice, my voice, came again. I kept walking until I felt a cold chill run up my back. I didn't think those thoughts. So if I didn't think those thoughts, who did?

I looked around at where I was. There were a few empty cars parked along the street, so the voice couldn't have come from any of those, and the passersby on the street all seemed to have earphones in and none had stopped to converse with me.

"Who are you?" I thought. Shockingly but not shockingly, I got a reply.

"Your conscience, Bruno. I am your conscience." the reply came back in my voice.

"Um, I don't really believe you, but okay," I said. I found my confidence draining and my fear mounting the more I tried to speak with this voice in my head.

"You can trust me. This is all wrong. You need to go back to Napoli. What will your mother think when she finds out you skipped school again?" The voice changed its pronouns when addressing

me, which I found a bit strange, but they did have a point. Education was super important to Mom.

"I'm going to save her... you don't think she'd mind, do you?" I asked. For some reason, my confidence was really wearing thin and I found myself looking around rather frantically.

"Would she mind? Bruno, do you really think you're being noble? You think a child who has only had his Stand for a day can meaningfully help three master Stand users, with one of them having the ability to access its Requiem form? You give yourself too much credit. And do you really believe that three teenagers can defeat the likes of the Red Mother? Her Stand power is unbeatable." The voice said. Okay, now I knew something was up.

I scanned the street closely before thinking up a reply.

"You're a Stand, aren't you? Or maybe a user?" I thought. I could hear myself laugh.

"Very good. Let's see how well you can fight now." Instantly, I felt the cold on my back disappear as a green, blue and purple Stand with two heads manifested in front of me.

"I am Everybody Talks, my user is Gemini," said the Stand, "and I'd like to see what you can do." I stared at the Stand for a while before taking in a breath to call my own Stand out. But the amount of air I took in was much greater than the meek, pathetic little whisper that came out of my mouth.

Abbey Road appeared before me, but it looked odd. Weak, frail. The two-headed Stand laughed before reaching out with a long, clawed arm and slashing Abbey Road's neck.

"You see, kid," said one head, "Stands are a physical manifestation of the fighting spirit. They are, thus, tied to how much the user is willing to fight. My ability is to exploit this connection and turn it into a weakness. Your Stand's strength is now a reflection of your confidence and willpower," finished the other, landing another strike on Abbey Road, who made distressed noises and hopped but didn't retaliate.

I shook. I was scared. I had no confidence, I couldn't fight back against this thing! But I had to try.

"Abbey Road, do what you can!" I shouted, my voice wavering. The great beast lunged forward and made a move to strike the other Stand with its hoof, but the other stand dodged effortlessly.

"Oh, Bruno. I gave you the option to turn around. But you didn't. And now you have to be humiliated," started one of the heads. I spit out a bit of blood onto the street.

"How disappointed your parents must be that their only child is such a sorry excuse of a Stand user. You come from such a strong bloodline. They must be so disappointed in you," said the other head, dodging a swat from one of Abbey Road's signs.

"You're wrong." The Stand stopped attacking for a moment.

"What did you say?" both of the heads asked.

"I said you're wrong." Little by little, I was gaining my confidence back. "My parents love me. I know they do. I've heard the way they talk about me. I've seen it. You know nothing about them," I said as Abbey Road reared up and charged at the two-headed Stand, brandishing the signs on its tail wildly. They landed as the large Stand raced past, cutting up the enemy Stand pretty good.

Everybody Talks jumped back to recover. "You," it gasped, "You are not nearly as powerful as your parents or anyone who came before you. You are not worthy of the names you have."

"True, I have big shoes to fill, but I was given those names for a fucking reason!" I shouted, gracefully stepping to the side as Abbey Road raised its two back legs off of the ground and landed two kicks simultaneously on the backs of each of the two heads of the Stand.

Everybody Talks fell to the ground and I could hear it moan in pain. I knelt down beside it and picked up one of the chins of the Stand.

"I'm Bruno Leone motherfucking Mista, and I just beat your ass." With that, I stood up and watched the Stand on the floor get withdrawn and float down the street. I was about to go check out where the user was, but I felt my pocket start to vibrate in my pocket.

"Hello?" I said as I picked up the call.

"Yeah hi, it's Marina! You'll never believe what I've found! I'm coming to your location now!" she yelled. I could tell by her voice that she was very excited- not worried. I spat out some more blood, withdrew my Stand, and looked down the street in the direction I came from.

A few moments later, Marina came tearing around the corner shouting my name. Right behind her came a streak of bright pink- a color I'd know better than anyone. It was my mom!

I screamed for her as I ran toward the both of them, my eyes almost filling with tears. As I ran, I could see her get emotional as well, her pale arms outstretched to embrace me and tears streaking down her cheeks.

We met in the middle of our two paths, on the sidewalk. I buried my face in her chest as I could feel her run her fingers through my hair and rub my back, unable to say a word. After a moment of just embracing each other and lightly weeping, I pulled away and looked at her relieved face,

"Where did you come from? How did you escape? Where are the others?" I asked, shaking with adrenaline. Her green eyes darted back and forth before she took my hand and turned to run back in the direction she came from.

"Nevermind all that! Mista and Giovanna are fine! They're safe! We have to get you kids back home! Gosh, it's almost dark!" my mom said, leading us both down in the direction of the docks. Again, that weird feeling crawled up my neck. She never referred to Uncle GioGio by his last name. I planted my heels into the ground, jerking her to a stop.

"Mom?" I asked, trying to get her attention. She tugged on my hand worriedly, her doll-like eyes searching mine. After she could feel I wasn't going to move, she whispered back, "yes, baby?"

"When is your wedding anniversary?" I asked. I could see a flash of panic in her eyes before she answered me.

"Why are you asking that right now? We have to focus! We have to get to the docks to find your friend!" she said, tugging on my arm again. Marina looked at me quizzically, I could tell she noticed something was off about my mother as well. She was a family friend and knew my parents as well as she knew her own, so I was sure she could tell something was up.

"Answer the question, Mom." See, the thing is, I already knew the answer. Most kids might not know the answer to that question, but I did because it was super easy to remember. January eleventh, 2011. Five ones, because my dad thought that one was a lucky number.

Her eyes searched me for answers and I couldn't help but feel pity. Whoever was playing my mother was doing an excellent job until that slip-up. She took my other hand, the sunset making a halo around her pink hair. Tears fell down her cheeks again as she looked to the ground.

"I'm so sorry." The person pretending to be my mother said. They began to glow, and soon enough the person holding my hands was not my mother, but a girl only a bit younger than I was. She had bleached, pale purple hair in a side ponytail and wore an outfit of mostly pastel blues, pinks and greens.

"Who are you?" I asked, Marina standing behind me to get a better look at the girl. Interestingly enough, this girl also had the same green eyes as my mother.

"My name is Cancer. You just witnessed... my ability." She wiped her tears on her arm as she struggled to look at me. "I tried my best to lead you out of here to safety, but I said something wrong, didn't I?" I looked to Marina for support but she just shrugged.

"My ability, Careless Whisper, will take the form of the person that the victim loves the most. I was supposed to use it to make it hard for you to fight me, but I'm not a good fighter and I don't want to hurt anybody. And it just so happens that the person you love the most is someone who you shouldn't have been able to meet as of now." Cancer looked up and smiled weakly. "But it's very sweet that you love your mother the most out of everyone in the world."

I never knew that. I always thought that I loved everyone in my family equally. But I guess the heart will always have its secrets.

"So, we will be okay?" I asked, letting go of her hands. She nodded and looked off to the side of the street, seeing if anyone was watching her.

"I don't see Gemini around, and besides him, no one else should be here. You'll be fine," she said, backing up.

"Oh, sorry for the tears and all that. I just miss my own mom a lot. The Mother got her, too. I hope you find your parents, I have no idea where they've stopped with them. Sorry. " and with that, Cancer ran off, and I could see a flash of light coming from behind the building she ran behind, indicating she had transformed again.

I looked to Marina in mild confusion, and she returned my look with a shrug. Then, we both felt a buzz and took out our phones. We each had a text from Enzo.

Hey guys! I'm done at the docks. Marina has her location on, so that's where I'm headed now. Just stay there!

"Oh shit, I kinda forgot about him," Marina joked. I chuckled and nodded. We waited for a bit before we saw our new friend come running up the street to meet us, the golden sun shining on his gray cap.

"So what is the deal? Do we have any leads?" he asked. I was about to answer that no, we hadn't, when Marina put her hand out to my mouth to stop me from talking.

"Hey, Bruno? What if the zipper was still telling us where to go, but just in another way?" She asked cryptically, pointing up. I shook my head.

"Marina I have no idea what you're talking-" my words stopped short as I looked to where she was pointing. There, golden with the setting sun, was a white street sign pointing down a street, and on that street sign was a zipper -the same circular zipper that I kept in my pocket- drawn on the sign in black.

"I say we go that way," Marina says. Enzo looked confused. "Oh, by the way, we're trying to find his parents by following a possessed zipper Bruno has. It's as weird as it sounds." Somehow, I don't

think that made Enzo feel any more secure. But in any case, the three of us started down the designated road illuminated by the golden glow of the setting sun, now more determined than ever.

# Long Time, No Contact

## Chapter Summary

A ghost from his parents' past comes to the rescue!

The road we were led down was full of small boutiques, coffee shops, and other stuff that would normally appeal to tourists. As we walked, I made some guesses as to how many of the people that walked next to me on the path were actually natives. But I was also focused, because we were still searching for something, though what that 'something' was, I had no idea.

"So, Marina," Enzo said, scratching at his arm, "how long have you known Bruno and his family?" Marina, who was walking behind me, took in a breath and made a humming noise like she was thinking.

"Since we were eleven or twelve, so about six years. I was inexplicably drawn to him, well, it would be more accurate to say that I was drawn to his parents, as my buddy Bruno here has only had his stand for a little over a day, but I've had mine since I was born." Enzo mumbled in acknowledgement.

"I wonder why Stands manifest so differently for everyone. I guess I never really thought about it," he pondered, leaning over to look into a window for a few seconds.

"Well, my godfather, who I refer to as my uncle - you know this- , knows a lot about Stands and he said that there's three or maybe four ways a Stand can manifest. There's the Stand arrows, which can kill you if you're not powerful or whatever, then blood curses, which are rare, then there's those who are born with them like Marina, and then there's Stands brought on by trauma, like yours." I tried my best to remember how Uncle GioGio explained it to me when I was little, but I couldn't really recall the right words. But fuck it, he got the picture.

"And which were you?" he followed up. I stopped for a second, thinking about the question.

"Ah, shit, well, I'd have to say I'm with you, because my Stand manifested the day before my parents went missing, as if he could sense there was trouble. But my parents always told me that their Stands could feel a presence in me, and it was just a matter of when it chose to show itself." I tried to keep myself focused, but all this talk of my parents had me distracted.

"Your family seems to know a lot about this sort of thing. Were they just natural born users?" Enzo asked. I could feel Marina's excitement bubble as she walked a little faster.

"Dude, Bruno, you have to tell him about how your family met. It's such a kickass story," she chimed, shaking my arm. I snorted.

"Yeah, yeah, we are kind of busy looking for them right now, I'll get to it later. But I definitely want to tell you," I said, spinning around to face the other two, "After you hear it, you're gonna look at me in a whole new-"

My sentence was cut off when I backed into something warm and a bit soft. A person. Marina and Enzo cringed a bit as I whipped around to apologize.



"Hey, sir, I'm so sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going..." I trailed off. The man was tall, middle-aged, wearing a nice dress shirt and tie, and had strawberry blonde hair and purple eyes. But the reason I trailed off is because he was staring at me. Not in a 'what the fuck, you dumbass kid' kind of way, but a 'you look familiar, do I know you' sort of way.

The man squinted his eyes and blinked, as if trying to make sure what he was seeing was really in front of him. I glanced to the side, trying to catch Marina and Enzo's reactions in the glass of the shop next to us. When I looked back at the man, his eyes were on the top of my head.

"Pardon me, but is your mother called 'Trish'?" the man said. My eyes widened a bit and I took a step back.

"Um, yeah, she is, how did you know? Do you know her?" I asked. Immediately, the man's face softened and a small smile stretched the corners of his mouth.

"There's only one woman in Italy with hair of that color and texture. And to think I thought those days were forever behind me." So he did know her. Interesting. Maybe this was what the zipper wanted us to find. Another moment passed with him just... looking me up and down, for lack of a better phrase, until the same curious and uneasy look came across his face.

"Please excuse my rudeness, but, if I may ask, who is your father?" he said, swaying to the side to stay out of the way of the foot traffic. For some reason, I felt compelled to trust him, like I could sense his loyalty somehow, so I just answered him.

"My dad's name is Guido." The man's eyes went wide before he shook his head in disbelief, squinting to see my face in the setting sun.

"And your surname..." he asked again, slowly, inviting me to answer.

"Mista. My name is Bruno Mista."

The blonde man's eyes became wide again, staring off into the distance past my head. I could hear his mutter under his breath "I did not expect that." before his attention returned to me and my group. Then, it clicked for me.

"Hang on- are you Mister Fugo? Like, the guy from when my parents were kids?" I asked. The man nodded.

"Yes, yes, I knew your parents when we were all kids. It's been a long time since I've seen them, though," He said, his face telling me that he was thinking of that time. Then he blinked a few times and looked behind my shoulder.

"And you... judging by your hair I assume you're Giorno's boy, yes?" the man said to Enzo. Enzo replied with a smile and put his words very bluntly.

"I have no idea who that is, sir." I had to laugh.

"Oh, you haven't seen him in years, no one probably told you. My Uncle GioGio is really, really gay and not married." Mr. Fugo straightened up and nodded.

"Okay, that I expected."

"Yeah, but he's not dating right now and hasn't for like two decades since his boyfriend was murdered. But he has a cat!" I blurted out, and then instantly regretted sharing such personal information with whom I considered to be a complete stranger at this point. Mr. Fugo looked at the

ground.

"Oh. My condolences," he mumbled before looking back at me. "So, why are you three kids wandering around the streets of Roma?" I was about to answer, but Marina spoke up first.

"We're looking for Bruno's parents. They were taken by someone known as the Red Mother. Can you help us look for them?" she asked in earnest. Suddenly, the man's eyes clouded in thought and he spoke with urgency.

"We must talk more, in private. Please, follow me." And the man whipped around and began stalking down the street at a very fast speed. The three of us took after him, crossing streets and cutting through back alleys until he stopped, took out a pair of keys from his pocket and unlocked a small car parked on the side of the road.

"We will go to my house and talk about your parents, and that soul-stealer of a woman. It's almost dark, if you need food or rest I can let you stay as long as you need. Yes?" Mr. Fugo offered, opening the car door. The three of us all nodded and got in the car.

The blonde man got in and started the car, pulling out into the street and beginning to drive out of the more urban part of the city. Mr. Fugo gave me a glance out of the corner of his eye and cleared his throat.

"So...your mother and father, huh?" he said almost to himself.

"Yeah. They said it was a shock to everyone, especially themselves," I replied. The man nodded, still looking out at the road.

"Do they get along?" I was put off by the question, but I thought it harmless to answer.

"Oh boy, do they ever. Too well. Almost eighteen years of marriage later and Uncle GioGio says they still act like how they did when they were dating." Mr. Fugo shrugged to himself, accepting what he was being told. I looked out the window at the buildings passing by.

"Hey, Mr. Fugo? How come you never wanted to reconnect with Uncle- with Giorno? He said he reached out, but you never wanted to reply. Why is that?" I asked innocently. From what my godfather had said about him, he was a very loyal and dedicated friend, so I thought 'what gives?' The man sighed and made a turn.

"Well, a lot of things. I couldn't see myself working for an organization that didn't have Bucciari's brilliance behind it anymore, and I didn't want to lose any more of my friends or put myself in a position where losing the people I loved could be a regular occurrence. But greatest of all, I was ashamed of how I doubted Giorno and his ambitions. I couldn't in good conscience pledge my loyalty to him after what I did," he explained solemnly. I tried to lighten the mood.

"Say, Mr. Fugo, I was just about to tell my friend Enzo here the story of how my parents met, but since you were actually there, why don't you tell it?" I saw his shoulders tense and his face harden.

"I don't really like to talk about my past, especially what happened around that time, but you seem like nice kids so I'll appease you. Where would you like me to start?" he acquiesced. Marina piped up from the back seat.

"Tell him about when you and Bruno's dad and your other friend tortured the fuck out of some dude but just danced around him like you didn't have a care in the world! That shit's my favorite," she requested with a grin. I saw Mr. Fugo's face turn bright red.

"Oh gosh, I remember that. Let's... let's skip ahead a small bit. Let me tell you about when we went to pick up Trish -your mother- to deliver her to her father." Ah yes, that bastard. The asshole that wouldn't leave my mom alone even in death. She had panic episodes even that many years later.

"Yeah, so you were going to go get the treasure, right?" I asked. I wasn't very sure of this part of the story. Mr. Fugo nodded.

"Exactly. So Enzo, the group I was a part of twenty seven years ago was given the task to get Bruno's mom to her father, and when we met up to receive her, she was certainly not the easiest person to be around. Not that I blame her, her mother just died and she was just thrust into a very dangerous situation. But I remember she made me take off my coat for her to wipe her hands on and bent my old friend's arm backwards for telling her what to do."

Marina scrunched up her face. "That doesn't sound like the Puma (her nickname for my mother) I know," she said incredulously. I nodded.

"Gee, yeah, I knew she was a lot feistier in her youth but I never thought she'd be violent. She never told me that part of the story before."

A smile reappeared on Mr. Fugo's face. "And I'm willing to wager that your father never told you I caught him checking your mother out and then he made it seem to her like it was me instead, completely throwing me under the bus, if you will," he chuckled.

I was like "No, he never told me about that. But he did tell me that you fell on her chest. Did that happen?" Marina and Enzo laughed as the man's face got red again and he cringed slightly. Mr. Fugo gestured with one hand out in front of him as he pulled into a narrow driveway.

"Look- we are here." He parked the small, gray car and motioned for the three of us to get out. The house was situated in a residential area on the relative outskirts of the big city, but not too far out of the way. By this time, the sun had set and the sky was now darkening much quicker.

We all walked up the path and up the few stairs that led to the door while Mr. Fugo took his keys out of his pocket. He unlocked the door and opened it wide for us all.

"Hey, Liora. I have a few guests I would like you to meet. I think we have a few things to discuss with them," Mr. Fugo called out, letting us three enter the house before him. It was a very small, simple two-story house, but I could definitely appreciate the homely feel. As I walked inward toward the dining room, I could see family pictures of Mr. Fugo, a woman with white hair, and a little girl usually standing between them.

When we crossed the threshold, I saw that there was someone seated at the dinner table. The white-haired woman from the pictures sat in one of the wooden chairs, reading something on her phone. She looked up at us with oddly sad and tired eyes.

"They're children, Panna," she said in a confused tone. Mr. Fugo nodded and gestured for us to sit down.

"Do you remember the young lady I told you about? From when I was working in the organization? This is her son," Mr. Fugo said, putting a hand on my shoulder. She smiled sadly for a moment.

"And these two are just my buddies," I said, poking Marina in the shoulder.

"I'm Liora, I'm his wife." she looked to the blonde man for a moment and then back to me. "Do you need anything? Tea? Coffee? Food?"

"Yeah, actually, coffee would be nice, thanks," I said. Marina and Enzo put in their requests, and Mrs. Fugo got up to fix our food.

"So, you seemed like you knew something about the Red Mother. Could you tell us anything about her that would help us find her, or my parents?" I could instantly feel the room get tense when I said that. Mr. Fugo drew in a breath.

"The woman you are looking for is named Bianca Di Salvatore. She was from a family with some sort of connection to the mafia. They were wealthy, as they were brief acquaintances with friends of my parents. We never personally met them but we knew of them. Just exactly what their connection to the organization was, we had no idea. When Giorno took over twenty seven years ago, he did something that really pissed her off. Hell if I know what it was. She turned to a life of crime in her teens and got arrested. She was tried as an adult and was supposed to receive a much longer sentence for her crimes as it was discovered she had an association with organized crime, but for some reason they let her go free about three months ago. By all legal accounts, it didn't make sense," Mr. Fugo explained, but I got the feeling he was dancing around something important.

"But that doesn't explain all the kids we've been seeing, the ones with the Zodiac code names," I thought out loud. Mr. Fugo sighed and started again.

"After she walked free, she began her search for thirteen people, mostly and preferably Stand-using children, to help protect her while she works to accomplish her goal. She visited these children and gave them an ultimatum- join her or see the destruction of their family at their own hands. Her Stand had the power to make that happen. She said that her goal would be for the greater good of the country and it would give the children a better life," he trailed off, at a loss for words.

"Gosh, how do you know all this?" I asked, expecting Mr. Fugo to answer me, but the answer came from behind me.

"Because that conniving bitch took our daughter." Liora set our cups down in front of us and sat down on the other side of the table. Their daughter- the girl in the photos, no doubt.

"Holy- I'm so sorry. Were any of you hurt? What did she make her do?" Enzo asked. Mr. Fugo shook his head.

"That's the thing. Mela, our daughter, went willingly. See, I told Mela of my time in organized crime, hoping it would serve as a warning for her to be good and to stay out of trouble. But I fear she may have taken the story the wrong way. I think that she thought that it wasn't fair that Giorno's disloyalty to the previous boss led him to his success, while my decision to not become a traitor gained me nothing- which isn't true at all. Then Bianca came along and further cemented those ideals into her mind. Mela thinks that I should have become the boss after Diavolo, and is in agreement with Bianca that 'Giovanna must fall'. She told me she would bring our family the power we deserved, effectively making our family replace... replace your family, Bruno."

No. Fucking. Way.

"But I told her this isn't what Liora and I wanted- we told her that kind of power only comes with major setbacks and danger- but she wouldn't listen to us anymore. Bianca had already promised her with so much, it was irresistible. But we knew it was all a lie- Bianca didn't want us in power- she's using Mela's emotions against her to put herself up at the top. She left us with no mention of where she was going or where we could find her- she wasn't allowed her phone. We just want her back," Mr. Fugo finished, clearly looking exasperated and desperate.

We all sipped our beverages in stunned, contemplative silence. Great. So we are gonna have to face a teen girl who wants to protect her family as much as I do mine. This is gonna suck.

"Gosh, what a bitch," Marina mumbled, "I wonder what makes those thirteen kids so special. Why out of all the teenagers in Italy, she's taking her time to carefully choose these in particular." Mr. Fugo shook his head.

"I'm not exactly sure, either, there's gotta be a reason. But it doesn't matter. How do you children plan on tracking them? You can't just be wandering around Italy- that would take too long," the white-haired woman asked. I held up a finger and dug around in my back pocket.

"This thing has been pretty good at showing us where we should go. We are trying to intercept my parents before they can get to wherever they're being taken," I explain, putting the zipper on the table. Mr. Fugo's eyes went wide as he picked up the zipper.

"This is one of Bucciari's zippers. It- it tells you where to go?" he asked incredulously. I nodded. He continued to inspect it carefully.

"Kid, it looks like you... have a ghost on your side. I've never felt anything so strange," he concluded, handing it back to me. I put the zipper back in my pocket and stood up.

"Well, thank you so much for the coffee. If it's alright with you both, I'll have a small nap. We have to get back on the road, I doubt they will stop moving just because it's night," I said, walking backward towards their living room. Marina and Enzo both stood up as well and followed me.

"Oh, certainly. Feel welcome to sleep as long as you want on the sofa. All of you," the white-haired woman said, getting up to presumably go get some blankets.

When we went to go sit down on the sofa, Mr. Fugo called after me.

"Hey, Bruno," he said softly. I turned around to look at him.

"It's really a pleasure to meet you. It's nice to know that my old friends wound up happy and safe- until all this happened, of course," he said with a gentle but tired smile. I smiled in return as I sat down next to Marina and kicked my legs up.

"It's nice to meet you, too. And I don't blame you for not wanting to involve yourself with my godfather anymore. It was the safe and smart thing to do- my mom wasn't happy with my dad wanting to stay, either."

He gave me a nod of acknowledgement and a final 'good luck' before I shut my eyes, underestimating just how tired I really was.

# Strange Friends

## Chapter Summary

Some four-legged friends lend our heroes a helping hand.

I was woken up from my sleep with a soft nudge on my shoulder. I brushed it off and nestled deeper into the blanket that was... not there when I fell asleep. "Five more minutes, Dad," I mumbled unintelligibly.

"Sorry to wake you, but I am making breakfast before I am off to work. Would you like anything before you go?" A male, but not my dad's, voice said. I lay in confusion for a few seconds before my brain started to fire up and I began to remember.

I remembered getting up for school, ditching with Marina, meeting Pisces, Aquarius, Enzo, Gemini, and Cancer, I remembered meeting Mr. and Mrs. Fugo, and my parents-

"Oh Saint Mary, what time is it?! We overslept!" I shot up, whipping the blanket off me and rubbing the shoulders off my two sleeping friends. As I look around, I find myself still in Mr. Fugo's living room.

"It's about five thirty in the morning. I'm making coffee and toast. Would you like some?" Mr. Fugo, dressed in a nice red suit with odd holes cut into it, said as he stood over me, gesturing to the pot of coffee on the kitchen counter.

"Thank you, that's really kind of you," I said in a panicked tone. I was freaking out big time and waiting for our food was super difficult because I couldn't stop thinking about how much farther away my family was- and if we would catch them in time. But eventually it came time to eat, and I wolfed down my food because I didn't know when we would get to eat next.

The three of us kids got up from the table and headed toward the door. I checked my pockets for my phone and the zipper and found both were still there. I put a hand on the doorknob and gave it a turn before I turned back around to look at Mr. Fugo again.

"Hey- Thanks for letting us stay at your place," I said, ushering Marina and Enzo out the door. The man smiled and nodded with his coffee in hand.

"Don't mention it, kid. Good luck, and when you save the world, tell your parents I said hello," he said with a smile.

"I will- Oh, and one more thing! What is your daughter's Stand power?" I asked. He looked at the floor for a second before answering me.

"She can... remove any negative energy around her, and make it impossible to want to fight," he answered, and I thanked him for his time again before slipping out the door. Strange powers, but sure. When I got outside, Marina and Enzo were waiting out in the street. I went out to meet them.

"So where to now? Do we have a heading?" Enzo asked, swinging his arms.

"No, we don't. Let's take out our magic friend and ask it," I replied, digging around in my pocket

and pulling out the small gold charm. "I'm sorry we slept in, do you have any advice for us on where to go? We're lost," I said to it, and then remember I was talking to a zipper. Of course, it said nothing.

"Well, no use just standing here, let's head into the main part of the city and see if we can spot any clues. Maybe we'll go see if there are any Stand users at the colosseum for old time's sake," I chuckled to myself and nudged Marina's shoulder. She smirked in return. Enzo just stared blankly at us.

"His parents got body swapped twenty seven years ago there. That's why we are laughing," Marina explained. He just got more confused.

"You two are so weird," he said. Marina snickered and looked off into the street, barely lit with the morning sun. Suddenly her eyes went wide and she pointed a hand out in front of her.

"Bruno, look! It is a cat! You think it's a stray?" she asked. I looked where she was pointing and sure enough, there was a small, grayish-blue cat strutting toward us. There was a certain way that the cat carried itself that seemed oddly familiar to me. Something within me told me "bend down, this is a friendly cat", and so I did. Usually, I don't touch animals that aren't my family's without permission, obviously, but something about this cat's eyes- I really couldn't explain it.

I knelt down and did that 'pspspsps' thing that everyone does, drawing the cat closer to me. I was used to cats- I grew up with Uncle GioGio's tabby, Narancia. The blue cat sniffed my fingers and nuzzled my hand. Marina bent down to pet the cat as well.

"Oh shit! There's a dog, too!" Enzo exclaimed, and when I looked up I saw a large, black dog with shaggy hair bounding up the road towards me, wagging its tail.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!" I hissed, wanting to stand and get back, but the damn thing got to me before I could. Just like with the cat, there was something about this dog that convinced me it wasn't going to bite me. I let the dog sniff my other hand, the one holding the zipper. It wagged its fluffy tail as it sniffed me, and began to lick my hand. I laughed as it tickled me, closing my eyes for a bit. When I looked back down, the zipper was not in my hand, but hanging out of the dog's mouth.

"Hey! Give that back! That was a present from my godfather!" I say to the dog, outstretching my hand. The dog bowed back in that dog play-stance, it's large, purple eyes staring deep into mine, as if to say "come and get it." Before I could reach out to grab it, both the dog and the cat took off down the street, away from the main city.

The three of us stared at each other for a second, processing if what we just saw was real. Then Marina shouted "Get the fucking dog!" and we all took off after them.

We ran for a long time, longer than I would expect two animals to be able to run. But they always looked over their shoulders, as if to check if we were still following, and would slow down when we started to tire. The buildings and streets started to grow smaller as we ran farther out of the city, up north. I would have asked the gang to stop and head back into the city, but these animals seemed to really want us to follow them.

I thought they'd just keep running forever, but they stopped on a bridge connecting a couple rows of buildings. They both had their snouts pointed off in some direction that wasn't us, and didn't turn around even when we came up panting behind them and removed the zipper from the dog's mouth.

"Hey, Bruno, I think they are trying to look at something," Enzo pointed out.

"Yeah, I can see that. The question is just what they're looking at..." I trailed off as I stood up. In the gap between the buildings, I saw the blur of a train making its way out of the city.

"I wonder if they're just interested in the train is all," Marina offered, but I put a hand up. Something wasn't right. And my senses proved correct because when the back of the train appeared from out behind the block, a bright yellow mark in the shape of the drool-covered zipper in my hand was spray-painted on it. I knew that wherever that train was headed was where we were supposed to go.

"Everyone, hold onto your asses, we are about to see how fast Abbey Road can really go! Get ready to jump on!" I yelled. I summoned Abbey Road, who knelt on his front knee-things so that the vertically challenged of us, that is to say Marina, could hop on.

"Okay, everyone just grab onto the person in front of you, hopefully we don't go flying off this thing. Abbey Road, get us on that train!" And with that, Abbey Road took off in the direction the train was heading, reaching the outskirts of the city in mere minutes. It caught sight of the train disappearing over a ridge and sped up after it, jumping rivers and dodging buildings. I turned to look back at the bridge the animals were on, and I could have sworn I saw them...fade away, like into dust and stuff. But maybe it was just the wind in my eyes.

Abbey Road managed to make it to the train tracks, and at this point was going like, 150 kilometers an hour or something like that. But it wasn't enough! We were still a long ways away from being able to hop onto one of the spaces between cars.

"Is everyone okay?" I screamed back into the wind. I got two meek affirmative replies in response, their voices soft against the wind.

"Well that's good! Because we have to go faster! Hold on!" I screamed, giving Abbey a kick on the side. In an instant the Stand sped up and lurched its body forward, bounding side by side with the train. It galloped fast enough that now it was keeping pace with the train, just beside one of the connections between cars. I took a deep breath.

"Hey guys? We're going to have to stand up!" I yelled behind me.

"What?! Are you crazy?" Marina shrieked back, "we will be thrown off in seconds!"

"You're just going to have to trust me!" I screamed back, letting go of Abbey Road's pink mane and leaning forward to swing my legs up onto his back. I stabled myself as I stood, leaning into the wind so I didn't fall over, and shifted to face the train. I took in a breath, held it, and then I jumped.

I flew through the air for what felt like minutes but was probably only like a second or two before my hands clung to the outside railing of the platform and I pulled myself up over it. When I looked back behind me, Enzo had already stood up, using Marina's shoulders in front of him for stability and holding his hat to his head with the other hand.

"Get ready to catch me!" He cried as he leaped. I grabbed his hands and helped to leverage him over the railing and onto the platform with me.

"You good man?" I asked, putting a hand on his shoulder. He nodded back, still clutching his gondolier hat. We both turned to see Marina shakily trying to stand. She was waving back and forth, trying to keep her balance.

"Rina, are you okay?" I asked. She shook her head no.

"I'm scared! I can't do this shit!" She screamed back to me. I looked ahead of us and panicked a bit.



There was a pole right in the way of where Abbey Road was running, about to hit her! I turned back to my friend.

"I know you're scared but you're going to have to jump, now! Just jump to me! I will catch you!" I say, leaning against the railing and stretching my arms out. She looked at me as if to say "if I die, you are paying for my funeral" and jumped off of Abbey Road right as the pole was about to strike them. The Stand disappeared from beneath her as Marina sailed through the air, grabbing my hands with surprising strength.

Enzo and I both pulled her up over the railing, stabilizing her as she regained her balance. We all took a few minutes to let the adrenaline wear off, just huffing and puffing. Especially me, because I felt like I just ran a fucking marathon.

"Okay, should we just go inside and wait then?" Enzo asked. Marina gave him a look.

"But won't they check our tickets or something? They'll know we are stowaways," she pointed out.

"You're right. We have to keep a low profile then, or just say our tickets are on our parents' phones. But I'm sure if we look like we belong, no one will bother us," I responded.

"And what about enemy Stands?" Enzo said, taking a long blink. I shrugged.

"I guess we will cross that bridge when we come to it," I concluded, opening the door to one of the train cars and stepping through, with my friends following shortly behind.

## Scorpio

So the three of us went inside the train, working our way up through the cabins. No one questioned us, because it was like my dad always said; "If you act like you belong in a place, no one will question you." We found a car that was pretty much empty, aside from two or three people in the front, and sat down to talk.

"Bruno," Enzo said, calling my attention to him, "tell me more about your family- their Stands." He blinked again. Marina looked away, still uneasy from the jump it seemed.

"What would you like to know?" I asked.

"What... what are their Stands like? How did they go about manifesting and controlling them?" He blinked again, rubbing his eyes with his hands. I sat back in the seat and thought.

"Well, my godfather's Stand is called Gold Experience, and I've never seen it before. It has something called a Requiem ability, but that's a whole other can of worms we aren't going to talk about. Anyways, his Stand's ability is to transform non living objects into creatures. It seems very harmless and whimsical, but it packs a nasty punch. He said he came about it in his youth, when a whole bunch of other changes started to happen to him."

Enzo made a face. I snorted.

"Not like that! Changes brought about by his father's ...magic? My godfather's father was a vampire. Anyways, he-"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, you're not just going to move on from that. Vampire? Like, Dracula?" Enzo said incredulously.

"Yes, like Dracula. Calm down, you're gonna disturb the other passengers. As I was saying, Gold Experience is a very powerful Stand, especially with its Requiem ability. My godfather's cat is also a user, but his ability is very passive." I blinked a few times. Something seemed a little off, but I wasn't quite sure what.

"What about your parents?" Enzo pried again. Marina looked over at us.

"My dad's Stand is a crack up. It's these six cute little yellow critters who can redirect bullets- he called it Sex Pistols. I've only seen them as of recently, so I haven't heard them speak, but Dad and Mom tell me they bicker a lot. He didn't tell me much about how he came about it, but I do know it happened from some sort of hazing ritual." I blinked again, as my eyes were growing foggy. Enzo squinted.

"And my mom's Stand is called Spice Girl. She can make things soft, which Mom told me was a huge blessing when it came to raising me. Mom was a natural born user, or I should say 'host', but her Stand only manifested when she was in big trouble, kind of like mine and yours. Spice Girl is also sentient, and I've been told she takes offense to terms of ownership." Enzo nodded, but his face was still twisted up a bit, from what I could see.

"I would ask to see a picture of your family, but right now I can't... I can't see. Like, at all."

A chill ran down my spine.

"Neither can I. Hey, Marina, can you see?" I asked timidly. I heard her voice.

"Yeah, of course I can. What's going on?"

"Okay, nobody panic, but I think this is the work of an enemy Stand." My vision grew darker.

"How do you know?" Enzo asked, inquisitive as usual.

"Think about it- why would we both go blind at the same time? It's gotta be an ability," I reasoned.

"But then why not target all three of us? If it is ranged, wouldn't it affect me, too?" Marina asked.

"Maybe there is a, uh, a trigger. We were the only ones talking, so maybe it's caused by a word or phrase. We just have to figure out what it is and avoid saying it anymore, then find the user and beat the shit out of them," I suggested.

"Okay so the plan is to find the trigger word so nothing else happens and then find the user? And beat the shit out of them? Do I have this right?" Enzo said, and I felt his hands come out in front of him.

"Yup. That or the Stand- that's it! The word is 'S-T-A-N-D'. If you say that word, you progressively get blinder and blinder until you can't see. How exactly it is doing that I'm not sure. But I'm sure that's what it is," I came to that realization mid sentence. In hindsight it seemed so obvious.

I could feel Marina shift beside me. "Well, shit, what now? Our offensive 'abilities' are blinded. What can we do now?"

"Hold on a minute," Enzo said, "Marina, did you just summon your 'ability'?"

"I did, why?"

"I can...see... the vibrations. Raspberry Beret can sense the vibrations your 'ability' is making around your body. Like echolocation, kind of. 'Ability' -based echolocation." Enzo put a hand on my shoulder. "We can use this."

"Okay, here is what we are going to do. Enzo, you're going to use Raspberry Beret's echolocation to find out which passenger is emitting an aura. When you figure out who it is, let Bruno know, who will then let me know. I will be your eyes and check to see if we are correct; that is, if the user is following us. We will go up the train and then all the way back down to prove we're really being followed, and when I find an empty train car I'll tell Bruno to use Abbey Road to trap our opponent in with us. From there it should be cake." Great!

I could feel Marina stand up, and us blind boys followed suit. She helped us orient ourselves straight ahead to walk up the car. It was hard to find the door when we crossed cars, but on the whole it wasn't too bad.

We got up about three cars before Enzo stopped short, causing me to bump into him.

"Hey! What's the-" I said, before cutting myself off. I swear to God, sometimes I don't know where my head is. Then, I heard Enzo's voice in my head- communicating via his Stand, no doubt.

"Someone is using their Stand up ahead. About four rows up."

I relayed the message to Marina.

"Okay, there's a kid in one of those seats. He looks about our age. Long, blonde hair. Black and red cloak. Let's test our theory," she replied.

We got to the top end of the car before feigning we forgot something and turned back around. Even without the nerves of leading our potential attacker right to us, I was uneasy. I really liked my vision and the train's wobbling didn't do me any favors.

"They are following us." Enzo's Stand whispered in my head. So we were right! This was the work of an enemy Stand, and that meant it was time for phase two. Marina located an empty train car and gestured for us to sit down while we waited. Then, I heard the train car's door open and shut, and my blood ran cold.

"So you are the Stand users," an unknown but very smooth, buttery voice said. He spoke like Marina and I did- he lived in or around our city, clearly.

"I could note the same thing about you, but I don't want to go blind," Marina spoke calmly, still seated.

"Oh, is that so? Seems like you figured out my Stand, Third Eye Blind, then," the kid said. "And by the way, you can call me Scorpio."

"Well, nice to fucking meet you, Scorpio. Do you by chance want to prevent me from reaching your boss in any way? Because I'm kind of getting tired of this shit," I growled, fumbling my way up to a standing position. Scorpio scoffed.

"You don't exactly have the moral high ground here, either, asshole. The Mother is right; your family is a shit stain on this country," he said. I felt my face flush.

"You better take back what you just fucking said about my family, or I will throw you off this train." Shit, I got really mad at him. That was a line he didn't have to cross.

"Bruno, chill out. You're still blind," Marina warned. Enzo didn't move a muscle.

"But let me tell you something, Bruno. Blinding Stand users isn't all that Third Eye Blind can do-" Then Marina shouted "Bruno, look out!" And I took something hard to the face, knocking me to the floor. That bastard just Stand punched me!

"Not much of a fighter, huh? Interesting, considering your pedigree." I sighed and felt around for something to grab onto while I stood up.

"Listen, I don't know what kind of bullshit that woman told you to make her believe her lies, but I am going to see my family and no kid like you is going to try and stop me. Go ahead, give me another punch. See what happens." I said, standing up and facing the direction of his voice. I heard his chuckling, then the drawback of his Stand, and then- there was a loud smack and Scorpio cried out in pain. Even without seeing it, I knew what happened. Raspberry Beret saw the Stand via vibrations and landed a hit before Third Eye Blind could strike me.

"What the hell! Your eyes! I thought you were blind, too!" Scorpio cried out. Enzo stood up.

"I am, dipshit. But my 'ability' is based on vibrations and it just so happens that an 'ability's' aura gives off a mighty strong vibration that I can read," Enzo explained, "I never knew until I was blinded by you, so thanks I guess."

Scorpio tried to lash out a few more times, but each time Raspberry Beret blocked the attacks with pinpoint accuracy, preventing them from reaching Marina and I. After a while, the punches slowed and I could hear the both panting.

"This... this isn't how it is supposed to go. My Stand... I've never lost before! I-" Scorpio stuttered.

I knew he was going to make a break for the front of the train, guys like this would rather run from a fight than lose it. So instead of trying to go after him, I just turned my back to him.

"Bruno, what the fuck-?" Marina whispered, but I put a hand up to stop her.

"Just watch."

Then, in a beautiful moment of poetic justice, Scorpio turned and ran for the front of the train car, but instead ended up on the receiving end of my outstretched fist. I snorted as he fell to the ground, probably with a very dumb look on his face.

"Dude, first rule of 'ability' battling. Always know your opponent's ability," I said confidently, as if I'd been battling all my life. Hey, what he didn't know couldn't have hurt him. Clearly, this really angered the bastard, as he snarled and rose to his feet. As he lunged to strike again, I yelled for Abbey Road and Enzo for Raspberry Beret. As I yelled, I could feel Abbey Road's long, powerful leg extend from my body, landing a direct hit on Third Eye Blind right at the exact same time as Raspberry Beret's fist.

The combined force sent Scorpio and his Stand flying. I could hear the crash as he broke through the metal doors of the train car and the yelp as he fell onto the train tracks. I slapped a hand to my mouth as my vision returned.

"Shit! I Hope we didn't kill him!" I said through my fingers. Marina walked down the aisle and looked out onto the track quickly disappearing behind us.

"Nah, he's moving. But he better get off the tracks. Good job, boys," she said, giving a nod as she closed the car doors to the best of her ability, before taking out her Stand and using a rope she'd drawn to lock the doors together. Enzo and I gave each other a head nod of dude solidarity.

"So, now what? Do we just wait until the train stops?" Enzo asked, taking a seat again. I joined him and took out my phone. Marina looked out the window.

"Yeah, pretty much. But we have to be careful when we get there, I have a feeling our troubles aren't going to end with that fellow on the tracks."

## Libra

When the train pulled into the Santa Maria Novella railway station a couple hours later, the three of us hopped off and walked out of the station. It was a pretty neat spot, actually. I took out my phone and looked up the station to get my bearings and see where we could go from here.

"Hey, Bruno," Enzo said, tapping my shoulder, "I'm like, actually really hungry. Do you think we have time to eat?" I nodded and typed some more stuff in my phone.

"Yeah, what do you want? There's Tuscan food, pizza, a couple gelaterias, bistros, what are you thinking?" I scrolled around the map, looking at reviews for different joints. Enzo smacked his lips and nodded.

"Dude, I could go for some Tuscan food."

"Sweet, okay. This place a little ways up north has really good reviews, and it isn't far. Are you cool with that, Rina?" She nodded in agreement and gave a double thumbs up.

When we were walking, we noticed that there was a pretty big crowd forming up ahead of us, which was confusing until we saw the large, stone wall and realized it was just tourists and stuff taking a look at the outer wall of the city's fortress.

"Why is it when I want to go see some ruins or a fortress, they're always closed, but when I'm trying to eat some damn food, all of Europe is queuing in the streets?" Marina asked sarcastically and I snorted.

"Well there was that one time my mom took us to see that aqueduct thing, right? It's not all-" suddenly, I felt like I was being watched. Not entirely unusual, as I get stares from time to time because of my hair, but this felt different. A chill crept up my spine as I surveilled the crowd, looking for the source of the feeling.

I found my answer on the other side of the fortress gate. Just to the side of the stone gate, I could make out a figure in the shadows, just watching. His pale blue eyes and black hair drew my attention to him despite his attempts to remain unseen. Plus, tourists weren't allowed in there.

"Okay, listen up bastards. We're being watched, and by the age of the culprit I'm gonna guess it's another one of Bianca's child spies. I'm going to warp into the fortress from the other side and see if I can catch him off guard. You two keep walking, so you don't look suspicious," The two nodded and we all continued walking along the path winding around the fortress.

Since the huge, reddish wall went around the entire complex and I would quickly be identified as a non-staff member, I couldn't just find another door in. But I guess that's what Mom and Dad gave me this big, teleporting Stand for, right? Anyway, I found a spot on the right side wall, made sure no one was looking, and created a loop through the wall. I looked through the loop to check if the coast was clear, and then walked to the other side.

The spot I ended up was behind some auditorium-type building in the midst of a few trees, to the far right of both entrances. I looked out of the trees and into the clearing to try and find the mystery stranger who was watching me, but I couldn't see the Fort's entrance from where I was. I had to go and find this guy before he found me.

Making my way out of the trees, I heard a high pitched chiming noise near my head. It sounded almost musical, like someone rubbing the rim of a wine glass with their finger. I stopped walking. I

wasn't sure if it was me, but it was almost like I could hear the noise getting slightly louder. The cold feeling of dread crept down my back as I turned my head to the tree next to me.

There, wrapped around the tree was a glowing blue vine, with what looked like grape leaves coming out of it. It pulsed with energy, wriggling itself around the tree like a snake. This was definitely a Stand. Then, before I could back away, the vine shot out from the tree and wrapped around my neck, pulling me closer to the tree. Thinking fast, I made a loop directly below me, connecting to the fortress wall. I fell through the loop and spilled out onto the ground a few meters away from where I'd been. The vine tightened around my neck as it was pulled downward, choking me. My eyes went wide, grabbing at my own neck at the realization I'd pretty much hanged myself. The pain subsided quickly as I lost control of the loop. I blinked my eyes and as they came into focus, a pair of brown boots walked up to my face.

"Well, that was pathetic." a deep voice said matter-of-factly, "you might want to get up. I think people saw that."

I couldn't help but turn red as I helped myself up. I noticed in doing so that the vine was still at my throat.

"Let me guess, this is your Stand?" I grumbled, pulling at the blue vine.

"I will be the one asking questions, and any attempt to try and run will get you a body full of electricity." When I stood up to finally look at this guy, his face did not shock me at all. It was the same kid who was stalking me at the entrance. And the vine was wrapped once or twice around his hair, connecting to his forehead.

"Oh yeah? And how do you know I won't lie through my teeth? I'm pretty good at it," I sneered. Wheezing a bit from the lack of air.

"Because that's my Stand power. Plain and simple," he said as he brushed some of his black hair off to the side. My heart sank a bit.

"I can't just fight you?"

"Not really sure how you can expect to land one blow when I could literally snap your neck right here, right now. Now tell me, how many are with you?"

I opened my mouth to take in a breath when I saw a bright flash of blue light and a burning feeling in my tongue. I yelped in pain and tried to grab at my face only to find that the vine had pierced through my neck and was buried into the back of my tongue. I could barely fucking breathe. And for some reason, I began to 'sing like a canary'.

"Two more. I am traveling with a girl and a boy my age. Their Stands can create inorganic matter from nothing and vibrate at different frequencies to bring about different effects, respectively." I spoke so easily it almost sounded like I wasn't the one talking. But it hurt a lot.

The kid nodded. "And do either of them have any relation to your family and what they do? We aren't interested in endangering innocents. Though to be perfectly blunt, my purpose here is pretty much just to stall you."

I tried to grit my teeth but nothing happened. "None of them have any ties with my godfather's organization besides being aware of it. They're civilians."

"How are you tracking the location of your parents?"

"Somebody -who has been largely assumed to have been dead for years- has been guiding us with markers along the way."

He looked confused. "Are you saying you're talking to a ghost?" he asked, looking for clarification.

"Pretty much, yeah. Also, could you please let go now? I feel like I'm dying."

The kid licked his lips in contemplation, grinding one of his shoes into the dirt.

"One more question. Why do you think you're the good guys, after everything your family has done to society?"

My eyes searched frantically for something to use to let me escape, but any branch was too far away or too sturdy to grab. I could feel blood run down my chin.

"It is difficult to believe otherwise when all I've ever been shown is love and support."

He met my eyes for a while, despite my attempts to flail and wiggle. Then he clicked his tongue and I fell to the ground, choking and sputtering like a dumbass. The Stand slithered on the ground and up to its user, disappearing into blue light around his shoulders.

"You're wrong. If your parents were truly innocent, we wouldn't be talking. But I won't stop you. It is completely your choice if you want to try your luck against Big Red, but I wouldn't hold out hope." And with those words, he was gone, disappeared over the wall of the fort using his stand like a grappling hook. I wiped the blood off of my face and sucked my finger. Man, there was blood on my collar. I thought to myself "I need to get Mom to wash this when we get home. She is a wizard with stains."

Since I had no interest walking around the private fortress with blood on my shirt, I created a loop on the wall again and walked through. Quite the handy ability.

It took a little bit to find my group, but when I did find them, they were already sipping on drinks and waiting on food.

"Hey, our boy is back, did you find the- oh. By the look of your neck and shirt I'm going to guess you did," Marina blinked, surprised. I sat down next to her.

"Yeah, he was weird. He was the one who interrogated one of my uncle's men. That Stand was no joke."

"You got your butt kicked?" Enzo asked, taking a swig of coffee. I scoffed.

"Um, actually, there was nothing I could do, Enzo, so that's not fair to say that," I growled.

"Which means he got his butt kicked," Marina concluded. I rolled my eyes.

"Glad to see you two have made friends."

We all waited until our food came, and I made sure to order as well. I encouraged everyone to eat quickly, as some things that kid said really got to me. After I paid, it was time to get on the road again.

"So where are we going next? Did you find any clues in the fort?" Enzo asked as we walked down the street.



"Nope. Best thing we can do is keep heading north. We're bound to find something in this city," I answered, carefully surveilling street signs, bare walls and alleyways. We needed something, and we needed it fast or else we were going to lose the trail and get even farther behind. The main road took us northeast. It was a very pretty area, I had to say, with plenty of trees along the paths for shade and brightly colored buildings. Our path took us directly to the Piazza della Libertà, which if you didn't know, is a cool little park area with some arches and fountains and stuff. Marina wanted pictures, but I told her we could come back with my parents on the return trip and take pictures then. She still took pictures.

We went over a bridge crossing a small river, and kept going down one of the main roads. We'd been walking for a good long while and I needed somewhere to rest my feet. I decided that after some rest, we would all hop on Abbey Road and gallop on over to the nearest train or bus station for some fast-travel.

"Hey, check it out. There's a public garden over there with some benches. Let's take a break before heading on," I point ahead at a green area lined with bushes and quaint black fence.

We got closer to the park, and my mind began to wander. I thought about my family. They were probably hurt, probably weak, and definitely worried about me. Oh, and my poor mom. This was the second time in her life she had been dragged across the country by people she didn't know to be taken to someone who wanted her dead. She never deserved any of this. She'd never done a bad thing her whole life. She'd only ever been sweet and warm and protective of me.

Warm tears flooded my eyes and fell down my cheeks as I blinked. I nervously laughed, trying to find the words to explain to my friends that I'm okay. When I looked at them, something ate at me. Everyone in the park, not just my friends, was crying, too.

# Scotty and Sagittarius

## Chapter Summary

The gang meets a new ally and a new enemy!

"Okay, I dunno what's happening, but this has Stand written all over it," I said, wiping my nose on my sleeve. "Our best strategy is to find the Stand or its user and find out what they want." Though I was trying really hard, the thick mental fog I got from being so damn sad was making it really hard to think.

"How?! It could be anyone!" Enzo exclaimed in an exasperated tone. Marina sniffled as black makeup ran down her cheeks.

"We could try finding an aura," she offered, "Can any of you sense anything?"

I squinted my eyes to try and see if I could find something. As I looked left, a flicker of dark blue called my attention to one of the park benches. When I blinked to clear my vision, I could see someone in a bright orange jacket sitting on the bench, with a blue aura that seemed to dance like a candle flame about to go out. It looked completely out of control.

"To the left, there's someone who looks like they're summoning and recalling their Stand over and over. Could be a trap so let's approach carefully." I gave the order, and the rest of the group tailed me as we made our way across the grass. I created a loop containing us and them to keep the stranger from running.

"You!" I called out to the person. Spectacular voice crack, there, I must say. "Are you a Stand User? Did Bianca send you?"

The stranger jumped and whipped his head to face us coming toward him. From under my tears, he looked about my age, maybe a little older. He had dark skin and four large stripes in his coily hair, and he was wearing a bright orange jacket with orange pants to match.

"What?" the kid said back in a raised voice. He reached out and touched the barrier of the loop. I blinked more tears out of my eyes.

"Are you a Stand user?!"

He narrowed his eyebrows. "Yes! I am."

"Your... your ability! Turn it off! I can't... think!" I shivered, my heart pounding in my ears and my breathing speeding up. The kid looked us up and down as we made our way over.

"Oh! Sorry about that." The guy's inquisitive and shocked expression quickly changed into a weak smile, and I could feel my heart slowing down. "Sometimes I can't even tell when it's been activated." He laughed nervously.

Now that I was actually hearing him speak clearly, he was obviously foreign born.

"Hey man, no harm, no foul," Enzo affirmed.

"Your accent- you aren't Italian. Who are you?" I asked, skeptically.

"Oh, my name is Scotty. I'm from Pennsylvania. Sorry if my Italian is bad, I'm trying to work on it. I learned it in school." Scotty stood up, offering his hand. I narrowed my eyes. Nothing this guy told me cleared him of being one of Bianca's lackeys. He slowly put his hand down.

"You're a long way from home!" Marina exclaimed.

"I'm, uh, here for university. Studying abroad?" Scotty's eyes shifted between the three of us, like he was picking up on my skepticism.

Enzo nodded. "Oh, that's very cool. Well, good luck with that, I'm sure my pal Bruno here would agree that now we know you aren't a threat, we'd best be on our way. Take care!"

Scotty reached out and grabbed Enzo's shoulder as he turned to go.

"Wait! Where are you going? Why are you in such a hurry?" He asked, a tone of worry in his voice. "And who is Bianca? You mentioned her."

I sighed. How many times have I explained this by this point?

"We're heading north because a Stand user named Bianca kidnapped my parents and that's where she is."

Scotty brightened. "Hey, I'm heading north too- I'm going to Milano. We could travel together. And maybe if you run into any Stand users along the way I could be of help! I really don't mean to brag, but my Stands go back a ways in my family. When my mom emigrated from Egypt she was actually worried that she wouldn't be able to find Stand users in Pennsylvania."

I looked to Marina, and then to Enzo, and then back to Scotty. After another long pause I shrugged.

"Fuck it, why not? We'll drop you off when we get to Milano," I relented, gesturing for him to follow and I dismantled the loop. "Let's get out of this park and try to look for another clue. I'd suggest we use Abbey Road, but he would probably need to stretch to accommodate us all and that would probably cost me a lot of energy. Not to mention it would look really fucking strange to non users."

"Hold on. What is Abbey Road?" Scotty asked from the edge of the group. I hopped over the hedge and fence bordering the park.

"My Stand. He's a quadruped. And speaking of Stands, explain yours. What was that crying tear-magic back there?"

There was a bit of silence before the kid spoke up.

"Well it's called Manic Monday. He kind of sort of just... amplifies my emotions and transmits them to other people. It's more defensive than offensive as it's obviously meant to distract, but he can sure throw a punch." Okay...

"...So you were upset?" Marina asked. Scotty shrugged.

"A little. I was just frustrated. But it's okay now! I have you guys," Scotty said with a smile. Well at least we knew he was friendly, I guess.

A small gust of wind wound its way through the trees strung along the street, carrying a few things

like napkins and other loose papers. When I made my next step, I felt something kinda slippery beneath my shoe. When I looked down, I realized I'd stepped on some sort of tourist itinerary. I picked it up and looked it over. There were a few normal places circled with normal pen marks, all except for one. There was one location that was circled with two circles and a rectangular shape at the top. The zipper!

"I know where they are."

Marina's eyes went wide.

"You do?!" She exclaimed, incredulous.

"Yeah. Lake Como."

"We get to go to Lake Como? Sweet!" Enzo nodded in support. I elbowed him in the rib playfully.

"Hey, stay focused. That's my parents you're talking about."

"Uh, guys? Anyone else notice the little light, right by Bruno's head?" Scotty asked from behind, tentatively. My blood ran cold. I barely was able to turn my head a few degrees before I heard a loud noise and a lot of heat and before I knew it my face hit the pavement.

Everything went fuzzy and I couldn't hear anything but ringing. I could feel the vibrations of my friends' feet running around on the street. Everything hurt, but I needed to help. I put my hands on the street and looked around. I couldn't focus on much, but I could see Marina, Enzo and Scotty chasing after someone wearing purple. Marina's aura flashed green and I could see her brandishing something that glinted in the sun. I pulled myself up off the ground and stumbled a few steps before shakily summoning Abbey Road. He stood still while I managed to climb on and hug his neck. He ran down the street, hooves pounding the road.

The warping pop that told me portals had been summoned blasted in my ears and I flinched. When I looked back up, I saw that Abbey Road had trapped the attacker in a loop. I gave him a weak pat. Good horse.

Raspberry Beret came in with a vibrating punch to the silver and blue Stand guarding the attacker. They both stumbled back into Marina, who I could now see was holding a glowing sword covered in her aura.

"You're not going anywhere! Stand down or get fucked!" She growled. The Stand's hands glowed and it began to form a ball of light between them, shoving it into Marina's face and letting it explode in a burst of white. That must've been what hit me.

Her sword fell out of her hand as she stumbled backwards against the loop's barrier. The attacker ran back the other way, towards the backside of the loop.

"Scotty, they are coming to you. If you really know how to use that Stand of yours, do it now!" Enzo yelled, chasing after them. Scotty froze.

"Manic Monday, this is 'hopeless'!" Scotty commanded. In an instant, the attacking Stand User stopped running and looked around. I sighed and leaned my head on the metallic guard on Abbey Road's shoulders. I couldn't do anything, so why try?

"Are you with Bianca, too?" Enzo asked in a tone that was supposed to be intimidating, but fell a bit flat.

"You get back! There's no use fighting anymore so just get back!" The enemy shouted back. I was drowning in apathy, and my head still fucking hurt too much to come up with a witty comeback. This wouldn't have happened if Mom was here to soften the ground for me like she usually is when I fall on my ass.

"Are you gonna try and run again?" Marina asked, with a more forceful tone. Manic Monday's effect was wearing off.

"There's too many of you, it isn't even a fair fight. Why fight a battle I cannot win?" The kid asked. I closed the loop. "Besides, it's not like you have any idea where you're going. Even with the detours and vehicle travel being slower than trains, the rest of the group is probably already to Bianca by now."

I paused.

"You know what, you're right. I have no idea where they are. I certainly don't know they're somewhere on the shore of Lake Como. Not a clue!" I crowed, wrapping Abbey Road's tails around each of my friends, placing them on the Stand's back and sprinting off down the street before the attacker could get a word in edgewise.

## Taurus and Capricorn

We sprinted a good distance through the street, heading north or northwest, before we slowed down to catch our breaths. Mostly me. Scotty heaved a sigh of relief as he was placed on the ground next to Abbey Road.

"So where are we going specifically, Bruno? Do you know?" he asked, adjusting his orange coat.

"Well, if we keep walking we should be able to find a train station, and taking a train to Milano would be much easier than running. From Milano, it should be pretty easy to get to the lake. Also, that isn't my name."

Scotty's eyebrows furrowed and Marina turned her head around to look at me.

"I thought I heard Enzo call you 'Bruno'. Did he say something else?" he said, in an extremely confused tone of voice. I looked him up and down.

"It's 'Bruno', not 'Bruno'. You're saying it wrong."

"Uh... I couldn't really hear a difference, sorry." He rubbed the back of his neck. I rolled my eyes and shook my head.

"You say 'BUHROONO' like an American. You're supposed to roll the r, or else it doesn't sound right. What kind of Italian did they teach you in school?"

The kid narrowed his eyes in confusion and then shrugged it off. I guess it wasn't worth the effort. Marina gave him a big pat on the back.

"Bruno is just salty that your English is most definitely better than his."

"I am not! I don't wanna hear another word in that stupid language anyway."

"For someone who supposedly doesn't care, you sure are mad about it."

"Whatever. I can't stand you."

"That's what makes us such good friends."

"I mean I'm not so sure about-"

She shushed me. I leaned my head back in shock, blinking slowly.

"Did you just shush me-"

She put a hand to my mouth and stuck her other hand out in front of Enzo and Scotty.

"Nobody move. We aren't alone." Of course. When are we alone?

Quicker than I could process, Abbey Road's long tails shot in front of us, guarding our bodies with the signs. I flinched as sharp, tinkling sounds came from the other side of the metallic material. I looked down. Bits of pipe, shrapnel and metallic debris fell to the ground.

"Well, shit. Guess we gotta find the user," Enzo grumbled, peering over Abbey Road's tail.

"Two, actually," Scotty gulped, gesturing ahead. In front of us, on the other side of some train tracks, two stands sat staring at us. One of them was petite and humanoid, almost robotic, and the other was reminiscent of a minotaur with large horn-like things on its head and hooves.

"Okay, gang. You know the plan. Find the user. Beat their ass," I whispered.

"But, there's two of them." Scotty looked to me, and then back to the train tracks. A bead of sweat slipped down his forehead. I looked at the bull.

"Then we will split up. I can take the big one, you three handle the small fast one since you might need the extra manpower given Paint it Black is mostly support." Enzo looked at me with his eyebrows drawn in.

"You sure?"

"Yeah. You guys got this." My Stand shook his mane as I stepped up onto the saddle bit. We cleared the fence easily and made our way across the tracks.

"You! Minotaur-looking fucker! Where is your user?" I asked in a loud voice, watching Marina, Enzo and Scotty run after the silvery Stand. The Stand exhaled loudly through its nostrils, making a mechanical wheezing sound. Abbey Road huffed in response.

The Stand narrowed its red eyes and hunched over. Its aura glowed red, and I could feel the ground vibrating through Abbey. Its hands grasped at something that glinted, coming out of the ground.

I steel myself for an attack and squinted, peering across the tracks to see what the Stand was wielding. Then in a swift motion, it hurled whatever was in its hands right at my face! Luckily, Abbey Road managed to deflect the majority, but when I looked down at my shoulder, a large piece of sharp metal debris was sticking out. I sucked in a breath and ripped that thing out.

While the adrenaline was coursing through my system and I couldn't feel the pain right away, I created a loop that would get me closer to the Stand pretty fast and charged full speed ahead. The Stand bellowed and shot more shrapnel at Abbey Road. Blood wetted the front of my shirt from previous injuries as some new ones that just hit. Abbey Road roared in anger and swung its tails at the beast. The Stand went flying and landed down the street a ways.

I took stock of the situation. So it was a pretty powerful Stand with a long range, and it could take metal from the surrounding areas and fire it at people without touching it. Judging by its size, I assumed it also did melee.

Then I heard laughing. The Stand rose up, hovering above the ground as a large, broad-shouldered blonde guy stepped out from behind a corner.

"It's funny, you know. Because you just missed them! Your parents, I mean." My eyes went wide.

"Tell me where they are!" I yelled, wiping blood off my cheek.

"Uh, no can do, kiddo," the guy sneered, "even if I wanted to, they're taking a shit ton of backroads so you can't use your 'family aura' to track them down. They're long gone, pretty boy." I growled in frustration and ran full speed ahead, galloping toward the guy and his Stand.

Abbey Road reared, readying to strike the Stand with a powerful hoof, but the bipedal stand fired a scrap of metal directly into the connecting rod that joined Abbey Road's leg with his body. I cried

out in pain as my Stand fell over and I rolled onto the ground. My arm was really badly cut and I was bleeding everywhere. I channeled my inner Dad and rose back up, gasping for breath. The guy leaned against a building.

"Libra and Aries and Capricorn were really disappointed with your parents' performance, Bruno! You'd think they would have put up more of a fight, considering their status. But I guess it's true what they say, Stands age and deteriorate much like their old, tired users," the guy jeered. Oh how I wanted to wipe the smile off of that smarmy face.

"I'm gonna guess you're Taurus, because, you know, bull," I gestured to his Stand, panting.

"Oh, so you're not completely useless! Bravo!" He slow clapped. "But your little pony over there seems to be really out of it. Sucks. You really should've called for backup, but I guess your huge ego got in the way of that, yeah?" The Stand opened its hands, sucking metal out of the area to make into floating projectiles.

"If it's a battle of egos you want, I must concede defeat. Because you're being...a mega dick right now." When he fired, Abbey Road deflected the blasts with his signs, sending shrapnel flying into the walls surrounding us. He flinched, avoiding the metal that flew back in his direction, before stepping back a few steps to keep distance.

"I was there, you know, in the car with your parents. Not the whole time, but starting from this morning. Man, they are pathetic. Your godfather was especially disappointing. No inspiring speeches, no asspulls, no regal charm like you imagine a don to have. He was just a sad, tired, lonely man past his prime." Taurus looked at his nails, biting one of them off. I spat blood. He charged up again, ripping pipes off of the walls and tearing them to pieces telepathically. This time, I had the clarity of mind to deflect the projectiles much more accurately, and some even ended up grazing his arms and shoulders.

"He's been under a lot of stress. You don't get to comment on him. Plus, he's probably tired from whatever those things you guys put in his arm," I snarled. My vision was going dark because of the blood loss, but I stayed standing up.

"Oh, you know about those? That's right. We left one of them in that lackey back in Napoli. That wasn't my idea, but I was outvoted. I wanted to kill him outright."

"Shut up, asshole."

Taurus chuckled. "Or what? You can't fight back right now, can you? As long as you're at a distance, I'm completely safe. You're just like your father. The second his Stand was disabled and his gun was taken he basically just gave up. He begged us to let his wife go, like a fucking sissy, but that was out of the question since she knew too much by that point and could chase after us." He closed his eyes for a while, and a small smile appeared on his face.

"Stop. Talking."

"That brings me to your mother. Trish, was it? How old is she? She looked so much younger than your worthless dad."

"If you value your bones, I would stop talking now."

"She really is something, though, isn't she? So delicate and feminine. Not to mention that figure. She could use a bigger ass but boy, I sure envy infant you if you catch my drift," he snickered, "when we hit potholes or speed bumps I liked to look in the rearview mirror-"



I saw red.

"DON'T TALK ABOUT MY FAMILY! DON'T TALK ABOUT MY MAMA!" Tears welled up in my eyes as I lurched forward, screaming. Abbey Road let out a mighty bellow and created a loop. I grabbed hold of him just as he jumped through, climbing up on his back just as he appeared right behind Taurus. The guy stumbled backwards, falling on his ass. Abbey Road reared and stamped down hard on his Stand. Taurus yelped in anguish.

"DONT! SAY! THAT! SHIT! ABOUT! MY! MOTHER! YOU! LOWLIFE!" I hissed through hot tears. I really fucking hate that shit, you know.

I could hear the shattering of bones and the breaking of tissues and his cries of pain. Abbey Road put all four hooves down on the ground and snorted. As much as I couldn't stand that kind of talk, I couldn't bring myself to kill anyone. I'm not like my uncle, at least in that regard. Plus, I was beginning to feel faint from all the blood loss.

"Let that... be a lesson to you," I huffed. "Never fuck with a man's mom, or her dignity."

Taurus nodded and coughed, dragging himself slowly across the floor. I leaned forward and wrapped my hands around Abbey Road's neck as he walked back down the road to meet up with my friends.

I turned the corner a ways down and saw them all walking out of an alley.

"Holy shit, Bruno you look like you just went through hell!" Marina yelped, summoning her stand and taking out bandages and antiseptic wipes.

"I'm fine, really," I said, sliding off of Abbey.

"No the fuck you're not! Take your shirt off!" Marina retorted, opening the wipes and handing them to me. "Wipe yourself down. I'm gonna go wash your shirt off."

"So how was the other Stand?" I asked, rubbing all the blood off and cleaning my wounds. Scotty shrugged.

"It was a little difficult for a second encounter, but it wasn't anything we couldn't handle as a team," he said in an uplifting tone.

"Enzo?"

"Oh yeah. Like Scotty said. Not anything we couldn't handle. We all got a few scrapes but nothing as bad as you. Also, your pit hair and chest hair is pink."

I stopped and looked at him. "Well, what did you think it would be? Green?" We all laughed.

It took a few more minutes but I got all cleaned up and us boys just chatted for a little bit more until Marina came back with my top.

"It's got a lot of holes in it and it's still pretty damp, but I got most of the blood out," she said, handing the shirt to me. It was definitely damp.

"How did you get it clean?" Scotty asked.

"Oh, I have an entire crime scene cleanup kit in my sketchbook since I murder so much," she answered immediately. Scotty's eyes got wide. She laughed and shook his shoulder.

"I'm kidding! I used water and a hairdryer I drew." I smirked at her little prank.

"Okay, guys. Now that we're all good, let's follow this track to a train station and from there, it's straight to Milano, and straight to my parents. Hopefully if we stick to the plan and just get there before they do, we can save them."

## Virgo

"Ten minutes?! We have to wait ten minutes for the fucking train?!" I huffed, staring up at the board of arrivals and departures.

"Hey, it could be worse. Could have been like, an hour," Marina offered, checking her phone. She told her moms she was with me, which wasn't a complete lie, but they think we're still in town exploring and stuff. They weren't too happy about her skipping school, but I mean it wasn't really a surprise. She's kinda a wild card.

"Well, we don't know about where my parents are or what they're doing, so I don't really have ten minutes to wait for the fucking train, do I?"

Scotty put his hand on my shoulder gently. "Your parents are going to be okay. I bet they're really strong. And I don't think they're ever gonna stop fighting to return to you."

My eyebrows furrowed. "I don't think they're able to fight, but that's a nice thought."

And so we waited... and waited... and finally the damn train showed up. We all climbed on and found our seats as you would, and waited for the thing to start up again.

"So you're in school up here, yeah? What were you doing all the way down in Firenze in late October? Hasn't school started by now?" Enzo asked Scotty, poking his head out down the walkway to see if there was any sort of beverage cart coming.

"Oh, I was visiting some friends and my professors let me turn in my work online. I'm all enrolled and stuff, don't worry." He smiled and his posture loosened.

"...My mom went to school in Milano, too." I didn't know why I told him that. Scotty looked at me.

"Really? That's so cool. What did she study?" He fidgeted with a buckle on his jacket.

"Fashion design and pattern making. She sews."

"And you all? Did your parents study anything in university?" Scotty looked over at Marina. She clicked her tongue and bit her lip in thought.

"Well one of my moms studied marine biology and my other mom studied chemistry. They met in school." This was true, but they didn't meet in school. I think they met at a pub near the campus.

"What about you, Enzo?"

The blondie laid back in the cushy seat. "Are you talking about my biological parents or my dad? Because my dad studied hospitality-type stuff. I doubt my biological folks got any sort of education at all."

So we all just continued talking, shooting the shit and everything until we pulled into Milano Centrale. Milano is fucking huge, and pretty damn urban, by the way. Most of it looks the same to me. Plus, I hate coming up north anyway. Sometimes, it is too cold.

Anyway we got off the train and onto the platform.

"Yo, check this out," Enzo said, holding out his phone. "There's another train here that leaves for Como a couple hours from now. We can catch it to S. Giovanni Station."

"Oh, shit! Would you look at that," I nodded, impressed. "Let's go look for that terminal." The universe was on our side, this time. I could feel it.

"Uh, Bruno, wait," Scotty said, pulling on my sleeve before I could take off.

"Yeah?"

"This is where I have to get off. My school is here. I can't go with you to Como."

I turned back to look at him.

"Oh. Are you going to be okay?" I asked. He shrugged.

"I'm a lot better having met you. And Marina and Enzo. I really won't ever forget you guys, I'd never met Stand users like you all before."

I scuffed my shoe on the ground.

"No problem, dude." He nodded and smiled softly, gesturing toward the exit.

"You guys can come with me to the bus stop if you want. A bus comes every seven minutes or so but I'm not really in any sort of hurry, so we can just hang out."

"Good idea. Let's get out of here."

We walked out of the station and started down the street. The walk to the bus stop wasn't too far, which was nice. It was fun just scrolling through our phones and checking out the people on the street. The sun wasn't exactly low, but it was definitely way past noon.

"Um, Bruno, what are you doing?" A voice asked.

"Looking at the sky, what do you-" I tried to speak, but something sweet was in my mouth. "-What the fuck?"

I looked down at my hand, or what used to be my hand. In its place was a finger made of translucent hard candy connected to the rest of my hand. The crystalline material was slowly creeping down and consuming more and more of my flesh!

"HOLY SHIT! WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING?!" I screamed. The rest of the group looked at me. Their faces contorted in shock and horror as they saw me, and then their eyes widened even larger as they looked at their own limbs beginning to morph.

"That isn't the worst part, y'know. Just wait 'til the ants and bugs come and eat you," a sickly sweet voice called out from behind us. We all turned around to see a yellow humanoid Stand sashaying down the street toward us.

"Raspberry Beret!" Enzo called out. His red and gray Stand burst out of his body and leaped toward the enemy Stand. Scotty sent out Manic Monday to join him.

"Nice try! By the time you even land one blow you'll all be candy statues!" The Stand cheered as it jumped backward, dodging all of their blows with impressive speed. I looked down. My entire hand and a bit of my arm had already solidified into a hard, red crystal. I couldn't move my wrists. I knew that Abbey Road would have a difficult time walking.

Enzo and Scotty's stands jumped around, following the yellow Stand around cars, trees and benches. Anything the enemy touched immediately began to harden and become brittle candy. I

could see bugs crawling around on the ground, hungry for snacks, and the sugar was enticing.

Raspberry Beret stopped for a moment and then began vibrating. The enemy Stand stopped in its tracks and turned to look at him.

"I think it's working! I've got it!" Enzo said. I smiled and was about to agree when I heard a sickening cracking sound. I looked at Marina with a pit in my stomach.

"Uh... Enzo... you might want to stop that," Marina growled.

"What do you mean? It's working!" Enzo crowed before turning around and seeing that pieces of our fingers and arms were cracking and falling to the ground.

"Stop it now!" I barked. "My fucking arms are cracking!" By this point my entire arms were crystallized, and it was spreading to my chest. I was having trouble breathing.

Raspberry Beret stopped vibrating, and the enemy Stand resumed jumping around.

"What a stupid mistake! Not only did you screw over your own bodies, but now your Stands are damaged as well!" The yellow Stand said, scaling a building.

"Bruno, what do we do?!" Scotty asked via his Stand. I furrowed my brows and sighed.

"I'm going to create a loop, so come close, then Manic Monday can pop in the opposite end and surprise the Stand from behind."

Scotty nodded and hobbled over to me.

"Ready? Now!" I yelled, opening a loop that ended just behind the enemy Stand. Manic Monday hopped through the portal and delivered a swift, surprise kick to the enemy. I closed the loop, just in time for the Stand to tip over the side of the building and fall to the ground.

It tried to Stand, but it was met with a barrage of kicks from Raspberry Beret. The Stand fell back down and unmanifested. In an instant, all that had become candy was their normal material, and I could breathe again!

"Wow, that was a close one. I wonder where the user is," Marina pondered, stretching her fingers and wrists.

"I don't know if it really matters," I replied, "hey, Scotty, I think I see another bus coming! We missed a few during the fight."

Scotty gave me a thumbs up and started walking to the bus stop with the rest of the group.

"Hey, it was really nice to meet you," Scotty said, taking a breath.

"You too, man," I said, "have fun in school." He smiled.

"Thanks. I hope you find your parents. I hope they're okay."

The bus pulled up behind him, and the curly-haired guy stepped up as the door opened. He waved one last goodbye before walking back into the bus.

"Nice guy. We should text him," Marina said, putting her hands on her hips. It didn't seem like a completely bad idea to me.

"When we rescue my parents, we could definitely set aside a date and time to meet up again," I agreed, "but right now we should see if we can get something to eat before taking the train because I'm starting to get tired of eating on a train."

So we walked a little ways away from the train station and looked for some sort of decent restaurant. Luckily, it being a large city, there were plenty of places. We had a pretty satisfactory dining experience overall, except y'know, for the fact we were all preoccupied thinking about my parents. But yeah, after our meal we went back to the train station and tried to find where the train to Como was taking off from.

We found the train and piled on. It was rather smaller than the last couple trains, but still rather nice. Plus, the drive out of the big metropolitan area and out into the more rural areas was pretty relaxing, as well.

As we pulled into S. Giovanni Station, I started to get a weird, familiar feeling. It was like a tingling in my brain, then in my heart. It was faint, but I could definitely feel it. I had felt this feeling before, but it felt as if I'd never really noticed until now. My eyes darted around at the scenery out of the window, and I kept craning my head around to look at other passengers.

"Dude, are you good? You look like you're paranoid," Enzo said. He scratched his hair from under his hat and looked at me, puzzled.

"Yeah, I'm good, I just have this feeling. Like, it's like I'm sensing something."

"Isn't that what all sensations are? Because...senses?" Marina quipped.

"You shut up, I'm talking about a supernatural sense. Like, something is nearby." I put my hand up in front of her face, scanning the station.

She looked down in thought for a second, then looked back up at me, licking her lip.

"Do you think it could be your parents? Are you sensing your parents?" She questioned. Yes! That was it!

"Holy shit! You're right! I can sense my parents! It's their auras! They're somewhere nearby!" I shouted in glee, summoning Abbey Road and peeling off of the platform. So this was the infamous 'soul-GPS' that connected Stand-using families.

"Bruno, wait!" Enzo called after me. The two of them were running after Abbey Road with excited but startled expressions on their faces. I took off down the road and into a small park, passing a statue of some large hands.

"Mom! Dad! Uncle! Where are you?!" I yelled, trying to see which direction my feelings were pulling me in. The sun reflected off the windows and casted glares into my eyes, but at that moment I couldn't do anything but run.

As we ran past a side street, a flash of pink caught my eye. Abbey Road immediately came to a halt and spun around. The feeling in my heart was stronger now. I retraced a few of my steps and came down the sidestreet, looking for the pink I saw. There was nothing in the street, except for a car pulling away from the curb and driving off. I squinted and looked inside the car.

There! In the back of the car, barely visible, was the unmistakable head of pink hair that belonged to my mom! From the way she was moving, I could tell she was sensing me, too!

"Guys! I found them! They're here!" I shouted excitedly, quickly turning my head to look behind

me to see if my friends were still following me.

"...guys?"

## Aries

When I turned my head, my heart seized. My friends were behind me, sure, but they were certainly not as excited as it was. Marina and Enzo stood frozen in the middle of the street, twitching and warping in impossible ways. I struggled to comprehend what I was seeing.

"Frightening isn't it? This chaos?" A voice said to my left. I looked over and locked eyes with a guy with fiery red hair, freckled skin and a white outfit decorated with accents and patterns of gold and red. He was shorter than I was, but his ruby red stare was sure intimidating.

I narrowed my eyes. "What did you do to them?" The kid looked back to my frozen friends.

"Oh, that? That's just the power of my Stand, Disturbia. Does it make your head spin? It should. It's warping reality as you know it." The guy leaned back and a black, blue and green humanoid Stand with flashing pink and purple parts materialized out of a thick, purple aura.

"Listen, all you have to do is let go of my friends, and I won't break your jaw, yeah?" At this point I was done with trying to reason with these people. I was sleep deprived, hungry, and very pissed off.

"You know, I don't think so. Here's how I think this is gonna go- you try to fight, I trap you in my reality and it's game over for you, and then I get to go home to my family." Cocky piece of shit. I summoned Abbey Road behind me.

"I don't give a shit. You're going down, asshole!"

Abbey Road reared up and charged with a bloodthirsty fervor. Disturbia twitched and fizzed and shot into the air before careening downward and hitting the ground with nasty force. Spikes of road and building broke off from the ground, glitching and twitching and turning black and green and purple. My Stand came to a halt and backed up, avoiding the spikes and the glitching ground.

"You know 'Ares', the Greek god? He presided over war, chaos and battling. It makes sense, you know, because my Stand represents the Zodiac sign 'Aries'. Aries is the sign most associated with aggression, impulsivity and courage. I think The Mother did a great job picking us out to be in accordance with these signs." The pretentious little fuck just kept talking and talking. Jesus!

"Hey, news flash, that woman wants to kill my parents so like, forgive me if I give less than zero fucks about her. Now just go away already! Abbey Road!" I yelled as Abbey Road swung his tails over the ground, slashing at the other Stand. It stepped back and held his head for a second, emitting a metallic screech.

"You know, you're a pretty pissy kid. Do you always have this sort of attitude?" Aries growled. His Stand took a running leap at Abbey Road, who used the walls on either side of the street to escape its fists.

Coming out on the other side of the wall, Abbey Road stamped down on the enemy Stand with its hooves. It screamed again and tried to reach around and touch my Stand's leg, but he withdrew it before the enemy could put its glitchy fingers on him.

Abbey Road jumped back, swinging his tails again. Disturbia fell back onto the wall behind it and crumpled to the ground. Aries spat up blood a few metres away.

"How is that for pissy? You're eating your own words!" I crowed. Aries helped himself up by his



knees.

"You are... largely overestimating yourself. Though that's not really out of the ordinary for you, is it?" he hissed, standing back up straight. His Stand stood up and began to float, too.

"Oh? And what makes you so sure?" I asked.

The kid chuckled.

"Why don't you check out your precious Stand?" He said. I felt a chill.

Slowly, I turned to look at Abbey Road. My heart skipped a beat. On the end of one of Abbey Road's tails was a twitching, glitching square of only a few centimetres.

"It seems that my Disturbia has made contact with your Abbey Road. In a few minutes, you and your Stand will be frozen in this reality, like all of your little friends. It's over for you, dude," Aries said, slowly walking in a half circle around me.

It was then that I thought about just how to get out of this mess. I mean, there had to be some way, right? The glitch was spreading up Abbey Road's tail. I looked around. It might've sounded stupid, but I was totally thinking if there was like some sort of procedure that could turn off this reality-altering Stand without putting myself in more danger.

Then, I spotted it! Just below the Stand's right hand was a sparking component, but it wasn't sparking the usual colors. It was red.

Okay, it sounds stupid when I'm thinking back on it, like, what are the odds someone's Stand has a self-destruct button? I was trying to find any angle, and time was running out fast.

"I know I'm not in much of a position to argue, but I still really hate your attitude." I said. The glitching had spread to my legs, and I couldn't move them. I was really gonna have to come up with something now.

"Oh, is that so? Because you were the one swearing and talking up a storm," Aries said as he circled closer, stepping on the glitching ground with ease, "and I must say, I'm definitely enjoying watching you eat your words."

Yes, you dumbass, just get a little closer.

"So tell me- what did Bianca promise you in exchange for you to hunt down a son and his parents? I'm honestly curious."

Aries looked at me, still with a victorious smirk.

"That, dear friend, is none of your business." I could literally smell this guy's cologne at this point, and it's a good thing, too. The glitching was up to my torso and beginning to freeze my arms.

"Oh so you play coy now but ten minutes ago you were giving me your life story?" Just a little closer.

"I don't need to justify myself to you, prick."

Closer...

"Yeah? Come on and look me in the eye and say that!"

"Maybe I will!"

Showtime, baby!

"Abbey Road! Now!" I ordered, and my Stand lunged his head forward, as that was the only part of him that could move at the moment, and knocked the enemy Stand over using his snout. I heard a click, and in an instant, Disturbia began to fizzle.

In a moment, its lights and flashing colors were all out, and the glitching paused its advance.

"How... how did you figure it out?" Aries asked me, his face losing color.

"It was a big fucking red button. What, you think I'm stupid?" My body was beginning to regain feeling, which was nice.

"But- but this wasn't the way it was supposed to go! You're supposed to fail!" The redhead fell backwards on his ass, looking up at me. Now free from the Stand's effect, I took a step over forward and looked down on him.

"Okay. No more games, wise guy. You're gonna tell me where my parents are going and then you're going to leave." My voice was low. Aries shifted around on the floor, probably trying to re-activate his Stand.

"I swear, I don't know where she is! We aren't allowed to see the address! But its an old mansion on the east side of the river. Please, I can't tell you anything else! Don't hurt me!" He cowered.

"I won't, but my patience is damn thin, so consider this a gift from my family to you." Geez, I sounded like my dad. Aries nodded and swallowed.

I moved out of the way so he could pick himself up off of the floor, and watched him scamper off down the street. As he ran, my friends came unstuck from their frozen prisons.

"Oh thank God you're all right! What the fuck just happened?" Marina exclaimed as she ran to me, Enzo behind her.

"Lot of shit. Can't really break it all down now. We have to move!" I answered, gesturing over to Abbey Road for everyone to climb on. When they were on, I jumped on up and took off down the street.

"Do you know where we are going?" Enzo shook my shoulder.

"Only thing I know is that we have to head east of the lake. There's an old mansion there. Hopefully we can find them if we cut them off before they head to the villas by passing through the docks," I explained.

We headed northeast, cutting through streets and getting a great view of the lake while we were at it. I closed my eyes, just hoping that we would be able to catch up to that car. The sun was beginning its descent, and the sky had turned orange. We needed the daylight to find these people or we would never see my family again.

Looking out toward the hills, I could see we were getting close to the road that would take you around the lake. It occurred to me that Aries fellow could have been lying to me, but at this point I just had to trust him.

After a few more strides, we got on the road that took us out of the town and into the hills. All of our eyes were searching the road ahead of us for the red tail lights of a car until... we saw it! A few red lights coming around a corner and driving up, deeper into the trees.

"There! I see the car! It's there! We have to hurry!" I screamed, pointing frantically. Abbey Road snorted and sped up. The clacking of his hooves hitting the street increased in volume as his powerful legs propelled us forward.

We were so close. The shitshow was almost over. I could almost see my family again. We just had to get there.

# Leo

## Chapter Summary

Fugo's daughter is all that stands between Bruno and his family.

We galloped up the road, which fell away beneath us and crumbled into dirt. The sun was sinking lower and the orange rays shone through the trees like lasers. At the end of the trail I could see a dilapidated old mansion hiding in the foliage. The red brake lights of the black car illuminated the old, cracked stone fountain in a deep crimson color.

Coming down the path, the house came better into view. It was incredibly run down. Deep cracks ran up the stone walls. Parts of the roof and walls had completely caved in and fallen. Thick ivy had free reign of the mansion. It looked to be about a hundred years old.

I slowed Abbey Road to a halt, keeping my distance from the parked vehicle. I didn't know what was gonna come out of that car.

"Can you see inside the windows?" Marina whispered, leaning forward. I squinted.

"No, the glare from the sun is too bright. We have to get closer." This was risky, really risky. But there really wasn't another choice. We all dismounted and tiptoed around to the car. The glare from the sun made us squint.

As we got closer, the burning feeling in my heart got stronger. No doubt my parents were in that car. In more poetic words, their blood was calling me to them, as is common for some reason among folks like me.

The driver's side door clicked and swung open. I held my breath. Someone stepped out of the car and shut it with a loud clap. When I could see who it was, my heart skipped a beat.

"You!" I recognized her from the pictures. She was a short, blond girl with a red jacket and orange pants. The sun caught on her earrings and made them glitter.

"If you don't leave this place now, you're a very stupid man." Her voice fired through the air. She meant business.

"Well, you kinda have my parents in that car, so that's a no-can-do. Though I do believe this is the part where I fight you." I leaned on Abbey Road's neck and he snorted in agreement. Mela raised her eyebrows.

"You're gonna get nowhere with threats of violence, dickweed. My Stand isn't offensive. You can't 'defeat' it."

I rolled my eyes.

"Oh, fantastic. Do you have someone I can actually fight? Or like can you just open the car door and let my family out?" Mela scoffed and shifted her weight.

"You have no idea what you're getting yourself into, and you have no idea what this is about.

You're on the wrong side of this. If you weren't so stupid, maybe you could realize that." The blonde girl rested on the back of the car, her arms crossed, daring me to try and open the doors.

"Oh yeah? I don't know what I'm getting into? Do you? Your father certainly isn't happy you decided to throw yourself back into organized crime after he worked so hard getting out of that life." Her eyebrows twitched. "Yeah, that's right. I know who you are. I met your family. I'm just here to get mine back."

She straightened up and narrowed her eyes.

"I'm doing what is best for my family. My dad was a moron for leaving the organization. He does not see what we could have had if he didn't leave. We could've been the richest, most powerful family in Italy."

Abbey Road huffed and stamped a foot. "Do you realize how ridiculous you're being?" I scoffed. "It's near impossible to completely remove yourself from gang life, and he managed to do it for you, his future family. He knew it was best to put himself in as little danger as possible. A simple, modest life is always better than a lavish life that could end in a moment. My parents' marriage almost ended the season it began because of that. I had my house broken into and if my mom weren't home at the time I would be dead right now. Not to mention, Bianca doesn't give a shit about your family."

"You have no idea what she wants! You've never met her. She knows my family deserves to be at the top. Giovanna has no morals," she retorted, tapping her foot on the dirt. The golden rays of the sun cast long shadows at our feet.

"Who are you to talk about morals? You kidnapped a mother and father because you want their power!" Marina spat. Mela looked to her and fell silent.

"Mela, I know you feel like your dad was cheated out of a good life. I know you only want the best for your family and your country. I know how that feels. But this isn't the way. Following some random lady and letting her kill a family won't give you satisfaction. She will not put your family in power. She will dispose of you and then take over Passione herself."

This seemed to stir something in her. She rustled around in her jacket pocket for a moment.

"Please. Let my parents go."

The girl walked toward us, stepping away from the car. I braved myself for an attack, but none came. She was telling the truth. Her purple eyes bounced between the three of us.

"I don't like you, or your family," she growled to me, "and I think you're incredibly arrogant. But your friend has a point." I'd never seen Marina blush like that before. Mela kept on talking.

"I'll let them go. But you have to let me get far away from here. Bianca won't be happy with me if she finds out I just let them out of my custody. Also, my original threat still stands. If you guys don't get out of here, now, she will literally kill you all." The keys jingled as she took them out of her pocket. Enzo scuffed his shoe on the ground.

"I think that's a risk we are willing to take. She probably already knows we are here, anyways," the blonde boy said.

Mela nodded, affirming her decision. She clicked the unlock button on the remote twice, gave Marina a nod and tossed her the keys and then ran off into the woods in the direction of Como.

Our attention turned back to the car. There was a click, then a bump, and then the bank door of the car lifted up, rising slowly.

The first one to slide out was my dad. His boots hit the gravel hard, and his knees buckled. It was the weakest I'd ever seen him. He turned back around to the car and leaned in. My mom's brown shoes slowly touched the ground. She was slow to right herself, but she eventually stood on her own. I drew in a breath.

I met her eyes when she turned around. Her tired expression melted away in seconds as the two of them ran as fast as they could to us. I met them halfway, throwing my arms around their shoulders.

"Mom! Dad!" I cried out, burying my face in their bodies. They couldn't hug back, as their arms were secured, but they pressed into me with their full weight.

"My son," my dad choked out. His throat was heavy with exhaustion and emotion, I could tell. Footsteps to my right made me straighten up and turn. Marina waved a knife she'd pulled from her Stand.

"Let's get those off, shall we?" She asked, obviously in a rhetorical sense, and severed the ties on my parents' hands.

"Marina! You came, too!" My dad exclaimed, pulling her into a tight hug. My mom took my face in her hands, tears welling in her eyes.

"Bruno... I'm so happy to see your face. I didn't know what happened to you! I thought-" she was at a loss for words.

"It's okay, Mom, we're back together now. We're okay," As I said this, my eyes went to the glowing purple arrow inside her right arm. Her veins were glowing the same color, spreading down her arm like a sci-fi illness. She let her hands drop before giving me another big squeeze and a kiss on my jaw. After she let go, I turned to my dad and wrapped my arms around him.

"We came here with my Stand! We fought all types of Users, just like you did when you were our age," I said, taking in his cologne. I felt him chuckle tiredly and scratch my hair with his hand. He always did treasure my hair. "Hey, where is-?" I was interrupted by the click of a door. I looked over my dad's shoulder.

Giorno stepped out of the car from the door behind the passenger's seat. He must've had a more difficult time opening the door with his hands behind his back, I thought.

The sunset shone on his long blond hair. Though it was disheveled and a bit ragged, he still looked like one of those Lord of the Rings elves. The gold decorations and accents on his suit glinted. Sure, he was my godfather and my family, but at times he looked like he wasn't the same kind of human the rest of us were. Something...greater.

He looked over my shoulder, and then back to me. "The horse... it's your Stand? Incredible," he said, giving me an approving smile. I smiled back. I couldn't help it. It felt so nice to know he was proud of me.

My mother let Marina go from another hug and looked at us all. Enzo had come up to us by this point.

"This is Enzo, Mom. He helped us, too." I gestured to the kid. She nodded with a smile, but fell serious quickly.

"You children need to leave," she said, as forcefully as her tired voice could muster. They all looked tired, actually. Not dead or anything, just a bit drained. Like those arrows in their arms were sucking out their souls or something. "We don't know who else is here."

"Aw, I couldn't leave you, Puma," Marina retorted, "not when we just got here." My mother's eyes flashed.

"I'm not playing around. Take the car, all of you. Go back to town. Call your families. Get out of the area." Enzo opened his mouth to say something, but fell silent. I bet it felt nice for him to have someone care about his safety again. Marina sighed.

"Okay, we'll go, but if something happens to you I will never forgive myself." She and Enzo walked to the car. I stayed, standing in front of my parents. My dad swayed a little, still finding his legs.

"Bruno, do what your mother says," he urged. I shook my head. My Stand retracted back into my body.

"I spent the better part of two days fighting a bunch of teenagers to get to this place. I am not going to turn my back on my family now. This involves us all. We're going into this together."

Giorno furrowed his eyebrows and gave a subtle nod. "Something tells me we are going to need all of the help we can get. Besides, the woman who wanted us here won't be expecting an extra opponent, and one without an arrow, no less."

A chill ran through the air. As the wind floated past my ears, I heard the sickly sweet sound of laughter echoing around in the dilapidated building.

"I wouldn't say 'unexpected'. The invitation extended to the whole family. I'm so glad you were able to arrive, Bruno. Come, let's have a chat." The voice, seemingly with no source, flooded my head. My mom wiggled her hand into mine. I pressed my other hand into my godfather's, and my dad held onto his wife.

This was it. The moment I had been anticipating for the past two days. The whole family, kicking ass as one. We walked toward the building together, and I had a thought about something related to numbers.

# The End

## Chapter Summary

The whole family stands together to defeat the enemy.

We passed underneath the stone doorway and into a large, open room. There were plants growing in some of the corners and the plaster peeled off the walls. The air dropped in temperature, and a chill ran down my spine. She was here somewhere. We just had to find her. As we stepped closer to the middle of the space, my dad stopped short.

"What is it?" Giorno asked, his voice in a low whisper. He would have communicated via Stand in different circumstances, but I got the impression he wasn't able to for some reason. Dad put his hands to his hips, patting lightly.

"I don't have my gun. Those kids chucked it a while back," he grimaced. Giorno nodded.

"Unfortunately, you aren't alone in that notion," he replied, waving some dust out of his face as he looked into a small room off to the side, "That seems to be her Stand power. To prevent us from summoning ours." He rolled up his sleeve and exposed the pink arrow buried in his arm, identical to the one Mom had.

"Does it hurt, Uncle?" I whisper- shouted to him, opening a rotting closet. He turned back to look at me and pressed his lips into a thin line and gave a small shrug. Yeah... not a good sign.

"It feels really cold without Gold Experience. Empty. That's how I'd describe it."

I'd never really thought about that before. People receiving Stand powers is common enough, but I couldn't imagine how it would feel getting your Stand taken away. It's like your soul. I looked to the other side of the room to see my mom walking down a hall.

"What's down there, Mom?" I asked. She turned back around. The hallway darkened a little as the light from her arm left it.

"I think there's a... a flight of stairs." She checked back into the room at the end of the hall to make sure. My dad walked past me, trying to catch up to her.

"A staircase? I can't believe anything in this building is still standing, let alone a second floor. " He muttered. I looked back at Giorno. He walked toward the hall, steps even and sure-footed.

"Stay close, Bruno. You're our main guy," he said, keeping his voice low. I matched his stride and walked down the hall with him.

The hallway opened up into a larger room, and as my mother said, there was a decrepit wooden staircase spiraling up to a second floor. It seemed to have been sanded down, though. My parents waited at the bottom of the stairs, looking back at us. Giorno walked past them, tapping the stairs with his feet to make sure they were enough to support us.

"It's safe. Just come slowly," he warned, beginning to ascend. The three of us tentatively followed him upstairs, holding onto the railing just in case. Before I was halfway up, my stomach made a



rumbling noise. Giorno paused to look back at me.

"When did you last eat?"

"I can't remember."

He smiled. "Guess we're gonna have to get a big bite to eat after this to celebrate. Maybe even on the lake." I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder. I turned, and my dad stood next to me, looking into my eyes.

"You're still growing. You have to eat, kid," he said warmly. My cheeks flushed.

"I'm not growing anymore! And when's the last time those kids gave you a meal?" I asked, nudging him with my elbow. He shook his head and rubbed his hand on my shoulder before continuing to walk.

We all came to the top of the stairs and looked at the walls ahead. To our right, an old door stood, barely cracked open. I got a bad feeling about that door.

"Do you feel that too?" I whispered into my dad's ear. He nodded, taking in a breath and adjusting his hat.

"Just stay calm. The thing you need most in a battle is your mind."

Giorno walked in front of all of us, bracing himself. With a sharp inhale, he raised his leg and kicked that old door straight off its hinges. It fell to the floor and splintered into pieces.

The room was just as dilapidated as the rest of the house. Torn curtains hung from empty windows, and the floorboards not covered by dry, faded carpeting looked like they could snap at any moment. We couldn't see it from the front of the house, but one wall of the room had almost completely collapsed, leaving a good chunk of the view of the countryside exposed. A part of the roof had evidently come off with it. The sky had become grayish now, and was darkening fast.

"It's not very good guest manners to destroy your host's home, you know." That sickening voice came again. In the corner of the room was a dark-colored desk, with an old cushioned chair sitting in front of it. On it, woman ran a comb through her long, wine red hair.

Giorno stepped into the room, and we all followed suit. "Have we met before?! Who are you and what do you want with me?"

The woman stood up and walked around the chair. She was slender, pale, and wore a pink suit. Her eyes were a pinkish red that seemed to glow with rage. Her eyebrows were thick, her nose slim, and her lips were colored with a dark red. She looked to definitely be around my parents' age, around 40 or so.

"Oh we've never personally had the displeasure of meeting but you surely affected my life," she seethed.

"Enlighten me."

The woman, obviously Bianca, leaned on the back of the chair. "Twenty some odd years ago when you became the boss, there were people in the organization who opposed the idea of having a teenager as the head of Italy's organized crime. And what did you, a child I remind you, do? You had them all murdered to cover your ass. You would accept no other opinions other than your own. Ironical how you're so keen on animals and plants but felt the need to end the lives of countless

individuals."

Giorno balled his fists. "Stop playing games. You have no right to take the moral high ground. I did what I had to do to protect myself. I had to prevent a coup." Bianca chuckled and ran her tongue over her teeth.

"Oh but that's the thing, isn't it? It's always been about you. I'm glad you're finally admitting it. You got rid of the old boss with the promise of helping this city, but you did very little to change anything at all. And when I, a chipper new recruit, worked up the courage to come to you with ideas on how to really make a difference, your men told me to get lost."

I could feel my dad tense. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see him grab for a gun he didn't have. Bianca smirked and reached into her waistband, pulling back one side of her blazer. She raised the gun up with her other hand fanned out, showing she wouldn't use it. She placed it on the ground and kicked it across the carpet to my dad's feet. "You were looking a little incomplete, and I'd never fight an unarmed man." He bent down to pick up the gun and brought it up as quickly as he could.

I stepped forward. "Hold on, I'm still lost. Why did you want me to come here, if you hated Giorno so much?" Her face softened a little, but still kept those sinister eyes.

"Oh, Bruno, don't sell yourself short," she purred, "If I'm going to instate myself as the boss, I'm going to need a right hand man. Surely you have some of your grandfather's ambition left in you? Don't you want to help the people of your beloved country? They suffer under Giovanna's rule. I know you would do well beside me."

I lifted my eyebrows, unimpressed. "Wow, you must be pretty desperate for power if you think I'm gonna turn on my family like that. And what about Mela? Didn't you promise her the underboss position?" This caused Bianca to pause. Her long nails ran along the fabric of the chair.

"She wasn't worth my time, not like you are. So, are you going to help me or not? This is your final offer. Take it, and become Ophiuchus. We will fix this organization as business associates and inspire some real change."

"...Yeah... that's a nice speech and everything but uh, I'm gonna have to say no on that one," I growled. Bianca took a step toward the center of the room.

The next few seconds felt like they happened in slow motion. My dad readied a bullet and pulled down the trigger. Bianca's wispy white aura flashed bright yellow as the bullet flew toward her. I heard a small, metallic 'ping' noise. We all paused in bewilderment and looked around. Bianca grinned. A breath next to me made me whip my head around.

When I looked at my mom, her eyes were pointed downward, open wide in shock. Her dusty purple shirt had a little black spot on it that was rapidly increasing in size. Blood began to run into her skirt and stain her yellow belt.

What just happened? I thought, turning back to Bianca, who was now surrounded by six little glowing yellow objects.

"And now the real fun begins."

My mom took a step back, hands on her abdomen trying to stop the bleeding. Dad cried out and ran to her side, taking his hat off and pressing it hard into her stomach. Bullets spilled out onto the

ground.

"I'm fine, go help Bruno and Giorno," she hissed, shooing him off.

"Did you really think taking away your abilities was my only power? Those arrows didn't just stop you from manifesting. They severed the bond between Stand and user. They gave your Stands to me!" She shouted, cackling as her own Stand appeared from behind her.

This thing was downright creepy. It was skinny and spindly, like a spider, though humanoid. Its eyes were the same color as the arrows, glowing from within. Its mouth was an immobile set of painted-on lips curled in a cruel toothless smirk. Its armor was light pink and black, reminding me of those designs you'd see on gothic iron fences.

"Abbey Road!" I shouted, and the Stand leapt forth, roaring in rage. Bianca snarled back.

"Gold Experience! Spice Girl!" She called out, and the Stands both leapt from her as natural as can be. Gold Experience- in his evolved, Requiem form- drifted towards Abbey Road. He pinned his ears back in fear and took a step back. I looked into those creepy, ever-staring purple eyes for a moment, heart pounding. Bianca scoffed.

"He remembers that look from somewhere. Where did he see that before, I wonder? Oh, I know!" She grinned again. "That must've been exactly how your grandfather looked before he died."

"How dare you compare him to that monster?!" Giorno roared, running to Bianca full speed. Her Stand sprang at him, throwing a punch straight into his abdomen and sending him sprawling backward. He hit the floor a few metres away with a crash. I watched, holding my breath to see if he would get up. He was down for one second, two seconds, and on the third he stirred and staggered to his feet, spitting up blood.

Dad prepared to fire again, but Bianca heard the clicks and his shots returned right back to him, grazing his shoulder and landing in one of his legs.

"For Christ sake, don't shoot anymore! It'll do no good!" My mom yelled, stumbling to try and avoid a right hook from her own Stand while pressing Dad's hat to her stomach.

Giorno took a breath and steadied himself just as Bianca's Stand came in with another attack. He grabbed a candle holder sitting on the worn table next to where he fell and hit her wrist with it. Bianca cried out in pain and rage.

"Valley of The Dolls! Send him through the wall!" She shrieked, and the spidery Stand grabbed Giorno by the lapel and with impressive strength, hurled him into the wall. His head hit the plaster with a sickening thump and he sank to the ground.

"Uncle!" I cried out, trying to run to him. I only got a few steps before I found myself walking backwards to where I started. Abbey Road reared, but he didn't dare touch Gold Experience. If he was hit with that ability, it would have been curtains for me, instantly.

"This is it? This is the great Don Giorno Giovanna?" Bianca snarled. Giorno pulled himself up slowly, his hand on his head.

My dad limped over to him, but a kick from Valley of the Dolls shattered the bones in his other shin and he fell to the ground.

"This is actually kinda fun!" The woman cheered demonically. Mom landed a weak kick to Spice Girl's hip, but with another barrage of strikes she staggered back until she couldn't stand anymore

and knelt down before collapsing completely. Dad saw her go down and began to drag himself back across the room to get to her.

Gold Experience Requiem floated to my side. I backed away in the opposite direction, scooting toward Giorno. All four Stands surrounded the two of us.

"Well, now. Isn't this nice. I have you both right where I want you," She sneered.

"Good for you," I spat. Valley of the Dolls threw a punch right into Abbey Road's snout. My nose felt like it was on fire and I yelped. I tried to summon a loop to escape, but the other Stands were too close. They were in the loop with me. It was no use keeping it open, so I brought it down.

"You'd do well to learn to shut your mouth when adults are speaking, brat. You know I've been dreaming of this moment for decades, when I was rotting in that jail. The look in your eyes, the blood on your face. But I never quite came up with something to say," Bianca pondered, tapping her nail against her cheek in thought. When she stopped talking, I could hear my dad say something, but I couldn't make it out. Bianca's lip curled for a second before she focused back on us.

"So how should I do it? Should I just beat you to death with my Stand? Have the little yellow fellows fly down your throats and tear you apart from the inside? Or should I subject you to the full power of Gold Experience? Even I can't fathom what he does. He has been good at hiding that from me so far..." The woman stood over Giorno, raising an eyebrow.

He coughed. "You have no idea what you're doing," he rasped. The wind had been knocked out of him, and he was bleeding from different cuts on his head and arms. She snorted.

"Oh, I think I do. And I know-" she was interrupted again by my father crying out again before being calmed to a lower register. "Hey, Spice Girl, would you shut those two up? Turn them into putty or something." The pink Stand nodded and began to float over to the other side of the room. Bianca shook her head and continued to stare down Giorno.

"Now where were we again? Oh, yes, I was about to kill you."

I looked over to my parents. My mother was laying fully on the ground, while my father was leaning over her in a way. His legs were bleeding and all sorts of fucked up, but he managed to prop himself up enough so that he was holding her upper body. They both turned their heads to look up at Spice Girl, who had risen high into the hole in the ceiling to prepare for the blow.

My mother shifted a little, eyes trained on her own Stand. The way her hand was laying on the floor stood out to me. It looked unnatural. Like she was holding something.

With lightning speed, Spice Girl abruptly changed directions, shooting down towards them. She drew back her armored fist in preparation to strike and began shouting her Stand cry, but as she fully extended her arm downward Mom's hand shot up to meet it and the most horrifying crunch of cracking armor and bone shattered my ears. Bianca wailed in pain, clutching one of her hands. I turned back to my parents to see my mother go limp and my father lean down onto her. Spice Girl reeled backwards, holding her hand. Though there was no light from the sun anymore, the silvery light of the full moon told me what happened. There, sticking out between her knuckles was the wooden shaft of the Stand Arrow.

As she screamed, she began to crack and melt away, with parts of her armor flaking off and disappearing into the night air. Everyone looked to her in silent awe. Not a soul moved. As pieces of her broke off and flaked away, I could see more of the breathtaking form below.

Her armor was transparent, letting a glow coming from her very core drive all of the dark shadows out of the room. The two raised portions on her head sprouted out into twisting, curling rose-gold antlers of sorts. Where there were once pink tassels around her waist, white sheets of delicate material blew around her. The Arrow had traveled its way up her arm and rested itself in her forehead, shining with that rose-gold color that adorned most of the raised accents on her new form.

I looked to Giorno, and it all came together. Valley of the Dolls put Stands into Bianca's control. However, Requiem Stands have a tendency to act of their own accord, whether or not their user still lives. She was a completely new Stand, untethered to both Mom and Bianca.

"Bruno."

She floated towards me as she spoke. Her eyes, though they were bursting with light, were calming and warm.

"It rests in your hands now." Looking into her stomach, the light looked to be fading.

"But why? Why can't you just vanquish Bianca yourself, right now?" I asked.

"That was not the desire the Arrow chose to fulfill. The Arrow grants your deepest desire, Bruno. Your mother did not desire to kill Bianca. Above all else, she wanted to protect you."

I swallowed. "What should I do? You have the Requiem ability, not me. If I face her, she could use Gold Experience Requiem on me, still!"

"Again, you aren't seeing the full effect. My powers are becoming yours, as well as every other Stand in this room, possibly even more than that. Nothing can hurt you if you are the only person with powers. That is my new ability, to collect power and strength and give it to you." She smiled softly. "I can already feel my strength becoming yours. Go. Don't worry about me. My goal is fulfilled, and I, too, can rest peacefully."

I watched her fade, all with a smile on her face. Before she was totally, truly gone, I felt her transparent fingers on my chest, over my heart. "I will always love you. Your mother loves you more than anything. If for any reason at all you need us, we will be right here. Oh, and be good to your father, he's going to need all the love he can get. Now, go protect your family."

With that, I sucked in a breath and turned away from her, facing Bianca and Giorno. Bianca took a step back.

"No, that's not how it works! I already severed the connection between them! The Stands all still obey me!" She shouted as Gold Experience floated next to her.

"Then try to use his powers."

Her eyes widened. I could see her struggling. I didn't care. Abbey Road snorted and pawed at the ground, preparing to charge. I dug deep and found my family's strength within me. With a long, powerful yell, Abbey Road took a leap and reared up in front of Bianca, knocking her to the ground. Hooves flew, with the added speed and dexterity of my father's Stand. I heard a metallic sound and looked to Giorno. The arrow in his arm had disappeared. He was free again. I paused my fury. A pair of golden fists tossed her into the air and pelted her body with punches. By the time I felt satisfied, there wasn't much recognizable left.

Giorno and I looked at each other, our faces bloody and our lungs heaving hard. I looked to the ground by my feet. There, twinkling in the moonlight, was the Arrow.

As I picked it up, I could feel my family's strength returning to them. The mission was completed. Except... I could still feel my mom's power there. Not her ability, but her strength. The strength she used to make a Hail Mary attempt to save my life instead of going gently. I was protected.

My attempt to give the Arrow back to Giorno was halted by a strange noise behind me. When I turned to see what it was it became obvious that the noise was coming from my father. He made a sound with his voice I didn't even know humans were capable of making.

Giorno and I came closer to the two of them. Dad was still leaning over Mom's body, only this time he was alternating between sobbing into her chest and shaking her shoulder frantically.

"Trish! Patrizia! Get up! Wake up! It's time to get up! Please, my love! Wake up!" He pleaded, his words all slurred together due to his throat being tight and his nose being stuffed up. When he heard us approach, he turned and looked up, his entire front side covered in a mix of his and her blood.

"Giorno! My wife! My wife, Giorno! She's not breathing, Giorno! Help her, please! Heal her! Please, Giorno! She's my wife!" Tears fell down his cheeks, catching the light of the moon and falling into his beard. He tried to prop up her shoulders to push her more toward his friend. I leaned into my godfather's shoulder, as her half-lidded face was too much to look at. Giorno cleared his throat.

"I cannot sense any life in that body. I can fix the damage but I can't wake her up again. She's gone. I'm so, so sorry."

My father howled in anguish another time and wrapped one arm over my mother's body, sobbing into her collarbone. He cradled her neck with his other arm, tilting her body more towards him. "Get up, come on, it's not bedtime yet, wake up, my love. Come on, wake up. Time to go home."

Uncle Giorno swallowed before kneeling down next to them.

"Here, let's get those legs taken care of, and that shoulder, too," he said softly, reaching his Stand out to touch his best friend. Dad secured his grip even tighter around her body and sobbed.

"Don't touch me! Let me go with her! Let me go, Giorno! Just let me go!" He wailed as Giorno healed his wounds.

I turned away, looking up through the hole in the building. There, in the sky, the same color as the bright, full moon, the shimmering figure of my mom climbed higher into the sky. As if she could sense me watching, she stopped and turned around to look at me. She smiled her playful little smile and then shot up into the night sky, her form becoming patternless sparkles among the twinkling stars.

## Epilogue

Uncle Giorno, my dad and I looked down at the rectangular patch of disturbed dirt. We were the last ones after the service ended. Marina, Enzo, Giorno's men, Mom's friends, Dad's family, and everyone else had already left hours ago. So it was now just the three of us all in our black suits, like three crows on a wire.

"It's funny."

I looked to my godfather. "What's funny, Uncle?"

He raised his eyes and looked into the distance.

"Your grandfather died trying to kill her. And your mother died trying to save you."

I felt my throat close up and my cheeks get hot. I turned to my father and sobbed into his shoulder. That was the first time I'd cried about her death, at her funeral. Before that, I was just... numb. I looked up at her headstone after wiping my eyes a little. It was marble, the kind she liked to go see when we went to museums. It was surrounded by flowers and gifts and drawings Marina did of her, all with "Rest in Peace Puma" written on them. On the headstone itself, the inscription read:

HERE LIE THE REMAINS OF PATRIZIA 'TRISH' MISTA AND 'SPICE GIRL'

JUNE 8, 1985 - NOVEMBER 2, 2028

MOTHER, DAUGHTER, WIFE, FRIEND, AND ANGEL. SHE OVERCAME THE FATE SHE INHERITED. SHE DID NOT COWER OR FLEE. SHE WILL SOAR BEYOND.

So... here we are, in the present. It's been, uh, 29 days since she died. I'll be honest. Life without her...is really depressing. Dad is a complete mess. Most of the day he just spends locked in his bedroom, listening to old voice mails and watching videos he took of our family on his phone. His Stand doesn't eat anymore. When I try to play video games with him or watch a movie he just kinda sits there and doesn't say much. The only time he ever really talks is when we're at therapy.

Liora, Fugo's wife, heard about what happened from her daughter, who met up with Marina again. She offered her services as a therapist to help us deal with stuff. She actually shares her daughter's Stand, which turned out to be a mask that takes away the feelings of the wearer so they can speak more freely without clouded judgement. Dad has a hard time saying much of anything without it on. But he tries his best. His birthday is in a few days, but he doesn't want anything. Any time I ask him what he wants, he just answers 'I want my wife'. So there's really not much I can do there.

I don't think there's been a night yet I haven't heard him crying for her, and on every full moon he goes outside onto the balcony and just talks to her, begging her to come back. Giorno comes over to visit a lot, to keep us company. He brings his old cat with him who really has no business being alive anymore, but it's nice to have another friendly face to cuddle. Giorno also spends a lot of time in his yard, sitting under his favorite olive tree. He likes to go there and think.

So yeah. That's the end of this story. Sorry if it's not what you expected. I don't want you to feel bad for me, either. I'm fine. Things are getting better. I'm looking forward to going to university in a year or two. Plus, I know she's where she wants to be. Nothing could've done her in without her permission.

That just goes to show you, though. In thirty years, nothing's changed. We're all still slaves to fate.

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